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# General Assembly

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**80**th plenary meeting
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New York

*President*: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Perera (Sri Lanka), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.*

**Agenda item 119**

**Commemoration of the abolition of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade**

**Commemorative meeting of the General Assembly to mark the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade**

**The Acting President**: In accordance with paragraph 6 of resolution 70/7, of 4 November 2015, today we hold this commemorative meeting on the occasion of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

It is now my pleasure to read out a statement on behalf of the President of the General Assembly, who, unfortunately, is unable to be with us this afternoon.

"There are some things we wish we could forget. There are some pieces of humankind's past we may want to wish away, but we cannot. Today we acknowledge. Today we consider. Today we remember. The vicious and inhumane system of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade remains a stain on the fabric of human history. Today, as we mark this International Day of Remembrance, we pause to reflect on what occurred, its impact on our present and how to ensure it is never repeated.

"Remembering slavery is not an abstract exercise. We know that more than 18 million women, men and children were victims of enslavement. They resisted, struggled and fought for freedom. They endured 400 years of exploitation and abuse. People like you and I were treated like chattel — bought, sold, traded, inherited and disposed of. Generations of leaders and ordinary citizens perpetuated, condoned or turned a blind eye to this.

"The philosopher Edmund Burke once said, 'Those who do not know history are doomed to repeat it.' The factors that give rise to entrenched slavery must be understood. We must watch for them. We must counter them when they appear.

"Discrimination, racism and xenophobia continue to plague our world. People are still stripped of their humanity and are exploited and abused for economic gain. Who can forget the images of men shackled together and being sold in an open market? I am not speaking of centuries past, but just months ago along the coast of Libya. Those incidents rightfully provoked outrage and immediate action. Countless more, no doubt, go undetected — passing through new doors of no return. Divisive and dehumanizing rhetoric is on the rise. Minorities and the vulnerable are targeted as the cause of problems. We must look at those warning signs and take corrective and preventive action. When we remember slavery, we must do so to learn its lessons and commit to not repeating the mistakes of the past.

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"We should also recognize slavery's nefarious impact on our present realities. Many challenges we now grapple with were reinforced by the horrific system of slavery. The solutions are therefore linked to addressing its legacies. We now speak of sustainable development and leaving no one behind. Therefore, we should bear in mind the social and economic inequalities entrenched through slavery. Addressing discrimination; countering imbalances in economic structures; balancing access to education, health care and decent work; guaranteeing access to justice — all resonate with the Sustainable Development Goals and would go a long way towards unravelling slavery's devastating impact on millions of people and their descendants.

"Lastly, we must ensure that we never again descend to that low point. We can do so by educating current and future generations about slavery and its impacts, but also by teaching about the struggles, the challenges and the victories. We have the tools to spread the message — whether through educational curriculums, in exhibits, in film or via social media. *The Ark of Return*, which was placed prominently outside this Hall, stands as a reminder of our collective commitment to do so.

"We cannot undo the past, but we can shape the future. Today we remember and honour those who suffered from slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. We honour them by promoting tolerance, justice and human dignity. We honour them by combating racism, by ending human trafficking and by upholding the basic tenet that 'we are all born equal, in freedom and dignity'."

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General.

**The Secretary-General**: I am pleased to join the General Assembly today to remember and commemorate the victims and survivors of the transatlantic slave trade. Lasting for more than 400 years, the abominable buying and selling of human beings was the largest forced movement of people in history. It was inhumane and shameful. And yet it was legally sanctioned, conducted and condoned by leaders and countries in Europe, the Americas and elsewhere.

Eleven years ago, the General Assembly established the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade to acknowledge the horrific trafficking in human lives. On this day we must also recognize the role played by many of our countries, including my own, Portugal, in robbing millions of people of their homes, families, dignity and lives and in profiting from their misery. However, this observance was established not only to acknowledge a dreadful chapter in human history but also to shine a spotlight on the dangers of racism and prejudice today.

Although the transatlantic slave trade was abolished in the 1800s, it continues to affect the social, cultural and political interaction among peoples and countries. The tragic mass human suffering must be recounted to younger generations through an education that provides an accurate reflection of historical accounts, including the many acts of bravery and resistance carried out by slaves. The United Nations Remember Slavery Programme and the UNESCO Slave Route project are among the initiatives that contribute to more inclusive societies through education and outreach.

It is equally important to highlight the enormous contributions of people of African descent across the world. We see those contributions everywhere, in every area of human endeavour and in every realm of human experience — from the sciences to the arts and from academia to sports, politics, law, civil rights and international affairs.

One descendant of slaves made history at the United Nations itself: Ralph Bunche, the first African-American to win a Nobel Prize. One of the most respected and celebrated international civil servants in the history of the Organization, he once said: "Hearts are the strongest when they beat in response to noble ideals." Our work today builds on his achievements.

Lewis Howard Latimer, the son of enslaved parents who escaped to freedom, is considered one of the greatest inventors of the United States, especially for his improvement of carbon filaments in light bulbs. Born in Saint Lucia, Sir William Arthur Lewis became the first person of African descent to win the Nobel Prize for economics. The contributions of Martin Luther King, Jr., to human and civil rights are of such global renown and eternal value that they need no description.

I commend to all present an exhibition currently on display in our Visitors' Lobby that highlights the work of contemporary architects of African descent in different parts of the world. One of the individuals featured is Elizabeth Kennedy, a descendant of slaves from Jamaica, who founded her own firm of landscape architects. Graciela Dixon is the first woman of African

descent to serve as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Panama, and we are delighted to host her here today.

The efforts of those people and of others give life to the theme of this year's observance — "Triumphs and struggles for freedom and equality" — which is inspired by the efforts of survivors and their descendants to establish better lives for themselves and more just societies for all. It was precisely to ensure freedom and equality for all that the General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 70 years ago. Article 4 of the Declaration is emphatic:

> "No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms."

Yet today we see modern manifestations of servitude and bondage, with millions of children among the victims. We also know the depth of the gaps that exist in the realization of the rights of people of African descent and the intensity of the racism and hatred that they encounter daily. In this International Decade for People of African Descent, we must recognize the work that is still to be done.

On this International Day of Remembrance, let us pledge to remain forever vigilant and to use this opportunity to lift up all lives and to fight against forced labour and other horrendous abuses that have no place in our world. Today we honour the memory of the victims and survivors of the transatlantic slave trade by continuing our common struggle to ensure that all people live in dignity and justice. I thank the Assembly for commemorating this day and for raising its voice for that noble cause.

**The Acting President**: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

Before proceeding further, and as indicated in the letter from the President of the General Assembly dated 20 March 2017, I would like to consult members with a view to inviting The Honourable Graciela Dixon, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Panama, to make a keynote statement on this occasion.

If there is no objection, may I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly, without setting a precedent, to invite The Honourable Graciela Dixon to make a keynote statement at this commemorative meeting?

*It was so decided.*

**The Acting President**: In accordance with the decision just taken, I now have the pleasure of giving the floor to The Honourable Graciela Dixon, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Panama.

**Ms. Dixon**: It is a great pleasure and a great honour for me to be here today to deliver the keynote address on the occasion of the commemoration of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session to mark the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. As I went through my notes and did my obligatory research on this topic, a great deal of information regarding the struggles of the African people and of the people of African descent in this part of the world in particular was accessible, especially the more recent history of the struggles of African-American people during the second half of the previous century.

Interestingly, I came across a new dimension in my own thoughts, and my appreciation of the same historical facts changed. My perspective of the history that I studied in my early teens was expanded, and I suddenly understood how deeply the contents of the abundant material that I went through were connected to my own personal history.

As I reviewed the depth of the trauma suffered by the hundreds of millions of men and women dragged away from their homelands and shipped across the Atlantic Ocean to be delivered as disposable merchandise under the merciless domain of ruthless people who sought the African human force as tools for the exploitation of their occupied lands in this hemisphere, I recalled many incidental chats that I once had with an old man who shared with me some memories of his childhood on the Caribbean island of Grenada. I then managed to rediscover my own existence.

I say that because, when reflecting on the struggles and triumphs of that old man, I see the struggles and triumphs of his grandmother, who was enslaved. I also see the struggles and triumphs of those who, like her, endured and survived despite the trauma and abuse that they suffered. While growing up in the Republic of Panama in a small city of only 16 streets and just a few avenues, at about the age of 16 I became infused with the spirit of the civil rights movement in the United States of America and supported its struggle. Because of some particularities of my own social environment, it was easy for me to adopt slogans such as "we are black and we are beautiful". I learned to love myself despite

the dominating standards, which were being imposed on black kids and which were leading to all sorts of restrictions, self-denial and the diminishing of our self-esteem. Although Colón, my city, was largely populated by black people, who were mostly immigrants like that old man — my grandfather — girls were forbidden from wearing their hair naturally, and young boys were forced to trim their hair down to the skull so as not to show their fluffy and very kinky hair. Others of my generation were also influenced by the North American civil rights movement at the same time that we began rebelling at school and expressing our disagreement with such rules.

In that context, for the first time my grandfather shared with me what it was like to grow up in a fishing village in a small Caribbean island. For him, there were only two options once he was no longer of school age: he could either take to the sea and become a fisherman, or he could take to the fields and work on a white man's farm. That was when my great-great-grandmother, who raised him, decided that Baba, as he was called, would have a different future. She got him a job at the printing shop as a cleaner, and there the miracle happened. His passion for words was set free. But the most important thing that he said to me was that his grandmother, who had been a slave, would frequently stand at her doorway and, as she hit her chest with the palm of her hand, she would shout in a loud and powerful voice: "No one can come hurt me because I am an Ibo woman and the daughter of an African king!"

That was the beginning of my learning process concerning my heritage and my grandfather. I must share with everyone that the most powerful lesson of all was the sense of pride and dignity acquired from knowing where we came from and who we are. With my grandfather, I began to understand the precious value of self-recognition, as well as our human, unbreakable capacity to survive all challenges — to survive and succeed. That is the lesson I have learned and nurtured all my life. It has become the power of my soul and the inspiration of my actions ever since. That is why, as I reflect upon the struggles and triumphs of the African people — of men and women like my great-great-grandmother — I cannot but humble myself in praise and recognition. For they struggled for their lives, and they succeeded. They survived. They struggled to retain the memories from home, and they succeeded. They struggled to preserve their souls, their fate and their culture, and they succeeded. They struggled to ensure their heritage, and here I am.

I am living testimony to the triumphs of my ancestors. I am living testimony to the resiliency of the black African woman who chose not to surrender, but to ensure the best possible options for her young grandchild. It is African heritage that paved the way to achieving what we are proud to carry today with our shining foreheads and smooth skins. It is because of such men and women that we can gather here today to mark our determination to never again in human history repeat the horrendous crime of slavery both for our people and every other human being on Earth.

That is why today we can render homage to men and women like W.E.B. Du Bois, Rosa Parks, William Wilberforce, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Coretta Scott King, Ella Baker, Septima Clark, Fannie Lou Hamer, Malcolm X, Anne Moody, Dorothy Height, Assata Shakur, Anne Braden, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela, to mention just a few. Together with those extraordinary women and men, I should like to render personal homage to that old man — my grandfather — and that Ibo African woman — my great-great-grandmother — who taught me through him the value of life and the importance of grasping challenges as we go through life, because challenges can certainly change the course of one's personal history. Allow me to render homage to those two old folks responsible for the design of the woman standing before the Assembly today. Allow me to render homage to all of those old folks who taught us black women and men to look up at everyone and not be belittled or intimidated by their apparent differences — those old folks who taught us the value of finding ourselves and our future, and taught us to embrace our legitimate right to a proper education with courage and determination, to equal opportunities, to healthy living conditions, to preserve and expand our culture, to live in a peaceful world and to enjoy the pleasures of equality, justice and recognition.

We have earned all that for what have been our priceless contributions to the development of the entire world. We have the right to enjoy and live in a free world. We have the right to enjoy and live in a world where the full and final eradication of racism and discrimination in every form will no longer be just a wishful thought. We have that right just because we are humans. Although we continue to face new challenges,

the greatest of all is the mark on history left by our ancestors. If they survived the atrocious conditions of the transatlantic passage and overcame the hell-trap of slavery, and resisted and endured, despite discrimination and segregation, then we truly have no excuse. We shall focus on our goals of freedom and equality. We shall not lose our track. And we shall be consistent with the task already set forth to be accomplished in the International Decade for People of African Descent.

Let us expand our minds and release our dreams to shape them into present and achievable realities. Let us expand those dreams — the dreams of Martin Luther King, the dreams of Nelson Mandela. Let us keep that ball rolling. Let us just do it.

**The Acting President**: I thank Ms. Dixon for her inspiring briefing this afternoon.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Gambia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

**Mr. Tangara** (Gambia): I am honoured, in my capacity as the Chair of the Group of African States for the month of March, to deliver this statement.

I wish to extend our gratitude to the Steering Committee — with membership drawn from the States members of the Caribbean Community and the African Union — to UNESCO and to the Department of Public Information for the planned activities and events for the Remember Slavery Programme.

Every year, around 25 March, we assemble to mark this day, established by resolution 62/122, in 2007, to honour the memory of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, one of the greatest tragedies in the history of humankind in terms of scale and duration, and to raise awareness of the dangers of racism and prejudice today. The theme for this year, "Remember slavery: triumphs and struggles for freedom and equality", is more relevant than ever before. Just three years ago, on 25 March 2015, the United Nations unveiled a permanent memorial, located in the United Nations Visitors Plaza in New York. *The Ark of Return*, created by Haitian-American architect Rodney Leon, stands as a reminder of the legacy of the slave trade and the importance of recognizing the contributions of people of African descent.

It is evident that the African continent is the birthplace of humankind and the cradle of civilization. It was home to Kemet, ancient Egypt over 5000 years ago. There was another ancient Kingdom called Ta-Seti in what is known as Nubia in the Sudan. Historians say that this may have been the earliest State. The very first scientific developments are associated with Egypt. Engineering, mathematics, architecture, medicine, State formation and governance can be credited to the African continent. Kingdoms such as Mali, Ethiopia, Great Zimbabwe, Kush and Axum all flourished in the early 1500s B.C.E.

Let us ponder for a moment what this year's theme means. What were the triumphs and struggles all about? It was a struggle for fundamental human rights, not to be the property of any person, and for the total liberation from all forms of enslavement and domination.

The heroes who triumphed are numerous — Queen Nanny, from Jamaica; Toussaint Louverture; Henry "Box" Brown; Robert Smalls, a slave and civil war hero; Quilombo dos Palmares, from Brazil; Harriet Tubman; and others, not to mention the unnamed enslaved African people who built prominent buildings and monuments, including the White House in Washington, D.C.

I also mention Martin Luther King, Jr., Marcus Garvey Jr. and Malcom X, who not only fought for civil rights, but human rights in the United States, and joined hands with the founding fathers of the Organization of African Unity to fight for the attainment of independence from the colonial masters in Africa. I also recall the then independent States' leaders — Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, William Tubman of Liberia and others — inspired by the vision of liberation, established the Organization of African Unity on 25 May 1963.

The founding fathers of Africa helped blaze the way to political freedom and equality across the continent. With the support of brothers and sisters of African descent globally and from civil-rights movements in the United States, the freedom fighters on the continent were more determined than ever to fight for the right of their peoples to self-determination in Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa.

In 1994, Nelson Mandela, an icon of struggle and success, ushered in an unprecedented event: the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa, bringing an end to the struggle for equality. To bring those memories close to home, 22 March 2018 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale in South Angola, which put an end to the myth of invincibility

of the South African apartheid army. Some of the survivors of that battle live today to tell their stories, and a monument has been erected in their honour.

The triumphs are numerous and continue to be manifest. Recently, civil rights pioneer Viola Desmond became the first Black Canadian woman to grace the Canadian $10 bill for her defiant act not to give up her seat in her fight for equality.

This year there is a project under way through the Mayor of Prichard, Alabama, United States, in conjunction with the Alliance Institute organization to establish an Africatown that will explore the effects of slavery and memorialize the lives of the Africatown residents as an underpinning for further cultural and economic exchange between the Gulf Coast states and African nations. Here again are narratives of success and linkages that keep triumphs alive.

Knowledge transfer was key during slavery, particularly in the area of agriculture, where the enslaved population from West Africa, who brought traditional farming knowledge and practices with them, were able to transmit and share that information with slave owners and contribute to productive farming activities in the wetlands and lowlands of South Carolina.

(*spoke in French*)

We must fight against institutional amnesia with regard to slavery. We owe it to the memory of its victims. It is a duty to reflect upon and question our beliefs, practices and attitudes as human beings. What connects the fighters I mentioned is their thirst for freedom. It brings to mind Emiliano Zapata, who said,

(*spoke in Spanish*)

> "It is better to die on one's feet than to live on one's knees."

(*spoke in English*)

As we honour all those who through their struggles and triumphs, victories and pain, brought about changes and revolutionized society, we stand strong against all forms of slavery, racism and discrimination today. As we acknowledge the tragedy of slavery, we remember its legacy, engrave the triumphs over the struggles in our hearts and celebrate the heritage of the people of African descent each day. Lest we forget.

**The Acting President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

**Ms. Al-Thani** (Qatar): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the 54 States members of the Group of Asia-Pacific States as Chair for the month of March.

At the outset, we would like to express our gratitude to the President of the General Assembly for having convened this plenary meeting to commemorate the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and Transatlantic Slave Trade, in accordance with resolution 70/7, of 4 November 2015. We would also like to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General for his very inspiring opening statement. We also express our appreciation to Ms. Graciela Dixon, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Panama, for her enlightening and informative keynote statement.

On this occasion, we would like to note the many initiatives that have been undertaken to reaffirm our commitment to implement the Durban Declaration of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which are aimed at honouring the memory of the victims of slavery and the slave trade and at restoring their dignity.

We commemorate this year's International Day under the theme "Triumphs and struggles for freedom and equality", which gives us an opportunity not just to remember and pay tribute to the victims of slavery, but to contemplate and learn from the lessons of the past. It represents an opportunity to call for action to oppose and fight any form of slavery in the world today.

The transatlantic slave trade was the largest forced migration in history, and, as we remember those who suffered and died as a result of this scourge, we have the responsibility to raise awareness and educate future generations about the causes, consequences, lessons and legacy of the transatlantic slave trade, to communicate the dangers of racism and prejudice and encourage continued action in this regard.

We would like to emphasize the importance of making sure that while we commemorate this international day actions are also being taken on the ground to develop and implement educational programmes through school curriculums, in accordance with national legislations, in order to educate future

generations on understanding of the lessons, history and consequences of slavery and the slave trade.

We would like to commend the efforts made by the Permanent Memorial Committee, the Group of African States and the Caribbean Community, in collaboration with UNESCO, to fulfil the General Assembly resolution on the creation of the permanent memorial, *The Ark of Return*, to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, in acknowledgement of the tragedy.

Finally, on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group of States, I would like to reiterate our commitment to honour the legacy of the victims of slavery and transatlantic slave trade and to fight all forms and manifestations of slavery.

**The Acting President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Belarus, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

**Mr. Rybakov** (Belarus): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Slavery and the transatlantic slave trade constitute the gravest violation of human rights. Due to its duration, scale and legality, the transatlantic slave trade represents an abhorrent phenomenon in the history of humankind. *The Ark of Return*, erected on the premises of United Nations Headquarters, is a silent reminder for all of us of this atrocious practice. At the same time, it prompts us to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, while considering the legacy of those practices. Although the issue of the transatlantic slave trade forms a sizeable part of world history, little is known about, on the one hand, its long-term consequences for affected communities, and, on the other, the important socioeconomic contributions that slaves made in the enslaving countries.

We believe that such gaps in history should be filled by academic research, activities at the local level and by raising awareness of the slavery-associated drivers, enablers and by-products, such as racism, xenophobia, intolerance and discrimination. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Today the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade belongs to the triumphs of history. It is an integral component of the path to human rights, democracy and free societies.

But, unfortunately, slavery as such does not belong to history. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), nearly 21 million people are enslaved, while other estimates are as high as 35 million. The ILO estimates that the profits generated by forced labour amount to $150 billion annually.

After the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, the phenomenon re-emerged in the form of trafficking in persons. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, about 53 per cent of the victims of trafficking detected today had been subjected to sexual exploitation, and about 40 per cent to forced labour. Most of the victims are treated and moved around like goods on the global market. Today there is no national legal framework that would recognize the trade in human beings.

Yet a great deal remains to be done to ensure that no one becomes a commodity in the hands of others. In that regard, we need to redouble our efforts to fully and effectively implement the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto and other relevant United Nations documents, such as the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, so as to ensure the fundamental freedoms of human beings worldwide and to protect victims of human trafficking.

We also welcome the designation of 25 March as the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade and the initiatives undertaken by Member States in reaffirming their commitments to implement the Durban Declaration of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, inter alia, aimed at countering the legacy of slavery and contributing to restoring the dignity of the victims of slavery and the slave trade.

Many years ago the famed nineteenth-century African-American writer, social reformer, politician and abolitionist Frederick Douglass said, "Knowledge makes a man unfit to be a slave". That quote is still topical today. It is ever more important to spread knowledge and to build a world together, on the basis of international law, where every human being can enjoy his or her dignity and live a life free from slavery, fear and humiliation.

**The Acting President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Uruguay, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

**Mr. Rosselli Frieri** (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC).

At the outset, I would like to express my deep appreciation to the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, for having convened this commemorative plenary meeting. I would like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres and the former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Panama, Ms. Graciela Dixon, for their statements.

The International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade is one of the most important anniversaries set by the General Assembly. It is the pinnacle of a series of events and activities that draw attention to the issue of slavery. The transatlantic slave trade was one of the worst violations of human rights in history. This dehumanizing enterprise undermined the very foundation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This should therefore be a day to honour all who died and suffered as a result of slavery and to consider the long-term causes, consequences and impact of slavery in order to ensure that this heinous practice never rears its head again.

Less than a week ago in this Hall, the members of GRULAC declared that any doctrine of racial superiority was scientifically false, morally reproachable, socially unjust and dangerous and should be categorically rejected, along with any theory that seeks to establish the existence of separate human races. Today, we recall a scourge that lasted more than four centuries, the victims of which were African men, women and children. That practice was legitimized by an anti-black ideology and by legislation set by cities.

That is why it is timely to reflect today on how we got here. We must remember the victims and honour their sacrifice, but this is also a time to address the legacy of that dark and abominable period of human history and to remind the international community of its moral obligation to contribute to redressing the crimes committed. In fact, from 1501 to 1830, the largest forced migration — and one of the most inhumane in recorded human history — was carried out through the transatlantic slave trade. Those who survived this shameful horror were unloaded in ports of Latin America and the Caribbean and forced to live a life of forced labour and endure systematic cruelty.

The wealth and earnings of many countries were built upon the hard work and abuse of that involuntary African labour system. Its practice and cost undoubtedly constitute a crime against humanity that must never be forgotten or allowed to recur. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the enduring effects of slavery have had an indelible impact on our societies. On the one hand, we have diverse ethnicities and cultures, which constitute invaluable human capital. On the other hand, we have deep-rooted social stratification, most of which originates in the colonial era — a period of mass exploitation. Nevertheless, the Latin America and the Caribbean States are committed to establishing a society of equals in which the prospects and achievements of individuals are not predetermined by the colour of their skin or their ethnic origin. We seek to create entirely inclusive and peaceful societies from which all can benefit from and that contribute to our progress.

The States members of GRULAC have committed to turning the sacrifice of the myriad victims of slavery into opportunities that could transform the realities of their descendants that live in our region and providing the diversity that strengthens our societies. Our regional action plan for people of African descent in Latin America and the Caribbean, adopted in Brasilia in 2014, as well as the special declaration emanating from the third Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, held in Belén, Costa Rica, in 2015, guide our efforts to fully integrate people of African descent and to ensure that development goals at the national and regional levels are wholly inclusive. The Group is particularly enthralled by the permanent monument to commemorate the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, erected outside these walls. It is a significant achievement that ensures that we will never forget.

In conclusion, the States members of GRULAC join the international community in commemorating this important day highlighting the struggle and recognizes the achievements of those who have been emancipated from the curse of slavery. It is indeed a day of celebration, but it is also a day to take stock and consolidate our determination to tackle the current challenges of inequality, intolerance, discrimination, poverty, colonialism, modern slavery and prejudice. Today, the States members of GRULAC can assure the international community that while some may opt to

look away, close their eyes and clap their hands over their ears, they cannot claim that they did not know about the brutality of the transatlantic slave trade.

**The Acting President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Israel, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

**Mrs. Furman** (Israel): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States on the occasion of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

Three years ago, Member States assembled outside this building to unveil *The Ark of Return*, a monument built to commemorate the victims of the transatlantic slave trade and to fight against racism and prejudice today. For nearly four centuries, millions of men, women and children were victims of the transatlantic slave trade. Generation after generation suffered under the most barbaric circumstances imaginable.

The Group of Western European and other States encourages the important work of the Remember Slavery Programme through the Education Outreach Section of the Department of Public Information. The theme of this year's commemoration, "Triumphs and struggles for freedom and equality," speaks to past accomplishments and to the work ahead. We honour and remember the heroic actions of the slaves, abolitionists and unsung heroes who acted in the face of grave danger and adversity. Their bravery contributed to generations of individuals who fought for freedom and equality.

This day is also about celebrating the legacy and contributions of people of African descent. In order to move forward from the past, we must have frank conversations about the history of this harmful past, honour the sacrifices others have made to move forward toward equality, and stand together to protect the rights of all.

Despite the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, millions worldwide still fall victim to slavery or practices similar to slavery and too many must continue to fight against hatred and abuse. That is why we, as the representatives of Member States and, more importantly, as individuals, pledge to speak out against injustices. That is why it is important that we discuss those issues today. We owe it to the nameless millions in the past who had no one to speak for them. We also owe it to future generations who depend on us to set a new standard of responsibility. Our progress every day will be the greatest tribute we pay to those who risk their lives for freedom.

**The Acting President**: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, who will speak on behalf of the host country.

**Mrs. Haley** (United States of America): We gather today to commemorate a shameful and brutal period in the world's history. We remember the more than 10 million men, women and children who lost their lives and their dignity at the hands of the transatlantic slave trade. The rare messages of hope that come from that terrible time are the stories of the courageous men and women who fought for and won their God-given right to freedom. Some of them made the ultimate sacrifice dying in slavery so that others might live in freedom.

We cannot change that painful part of our history but we can learn from it by remembering those remarkable people. We remember Elizabeth Freeman, an African-American slave who was the first to sue for her freedom and win in a Massachusetts court in 1780. She was inspired to fight for her freedom by listening to the wealthy family she served discuss the Bill of Rights. In describing her time in captivity, Elizabeth said:

> "If one minute's freedom had been offered to me and I had been told I must die at the end of that one minute, I would have taken it just to stand one minute on God's Earth as a free woman."

Two hundred years later Elizabeth's pain still stings for anyone who believes in the inalienable right to freedom. Elizabeth won her liberty but most slaves had to wait 83 years for President Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation. And even then, the journey to full participation in the American dream for African-Americans was far from over. It was not until the 1960s, in the not-too-distant past, that the descendants of slaves were granted equality before the law, and that struggle continues. In Elizabeth's words and her example, we find the inspiration for all of us to protect the hard-won gains of liberty and to continue our work to extinguish hate and discrimination.

Next week we will commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In 1963, when Dr. King was jailed in Birmingham, Alabama, he wrote about the struggle for civil rights that he was leading in my country. Even from his jail cell, he wrote:

> "If the inexpressible cruelties of slavery could not stop us, the opposition we now face will surely fail. We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embodied in our echoing demands."

He was right.

The progress we have achieved since Dr. King wrote those words has been especially important to me as the former Governor of South Carolina. My state's troubled history with slavery and discrimination is well known, and its lessons live on. Anyone who knows the South Carolina of today knows how much progress has been made as we use those lessons to move forward as a people. While we are proud of what we have achieved, we do not forget the long and challenging road that got us here.

That is why the United States helped fund the permanent memorial to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. That is why the International Decade for People of African Descent is so important. They remind us of the work we must do to defeat slavery and inequality and to eradicate discrimination in all forms. They give us role models, like Elizabeth Freeman, to guide our efforts. Elizabeth Freeman died a free woman in 1829. I am told her tombstone still exists in an old cemetery in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. It reads, in part:

> "She was born a slave and remained a slave for nearly thirty years. She could neither read nor write yet in her own sphere she had no superior or equal."

May we go forward to build a freer and more inclusive world, informed by the lessons of history and inspired by the example of extraordinary people like Elizabeth Freeman.

**Mrs. Pobee** (Ghana): First and foremost, I wish to commend the President and the Secretariat for convening today's important event in observance of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of the Gambia on behalf of the Group of African States. We would like to make the following remarks on behalf of Ghana.

We thank Ms. Graciela Dixon, the former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Panama, for her inspiring statement. The theme for this year's commemoration, "Triumphs and struggles for freedom and equality", suggests that our observance of the Day must go beyond the mere remembrance of the victims to foster dialogue on addressing the contemporary forms of slavery and renew our commitment to action.

The dehumanizing slave trade, spanning nearly 400 years, resulted in the forced displacement of nearly 12.5 million Africans from the continent, across the Atlantic to the Americas and the Caribbean. While that heinous crime against humanity wreaked devastating consequences for the continent of Africa, we also acknowledge the fact that the victims of slavery and their descendants, through their stories of resilience and survival, inspired movements for change around the world, in particular for Africa's decolonization and the pan-Africanist movement.

The influence and immense contribution of slaves and their descendants in the development of the Americas and the Caribbean must be acknowledged and celebrated. In spite of its horrendous nature, the slave trade resulted in the transformation of the world through the shaping of new cultures. Research has shown that the transfer of the technical and scientific knowledge and skills that went with it, together with African spirituality and cultures, have all had a positive impact on modern-day societies across the globe.

The irrepressible spirit that led to slave rebellions on the islands of Haiti, Jamaica and many others ultimately inspired the movement to abolish slavery and fuelled decolonization in Africa. The influence of renowned pan-Africanists such as Marcus Garvey and W.E.B Dubois, among others, contributed to Africa's struggle for freedom, equality and justice.

The remnants of the slave trade in Ghana are still visible today in the approximately 40 slave forts and castles dotting Ghana's coastline, three of which have been designated UNESCO World Heritage Sites. *The Ark of Return*, located in the visitor's plaza of the United Nations in New York, is a permanent memorial to the victims of the slave trade and will, for years to come, remind us of that dark period in history. But more importantly, the *Ark* also carries a message of hope when juxtaposed with The Door of No Return located at Elmina Castle in Ghana, from where thousands of slaves were shipped. Through special events and initiatives, such as the Pan African Historical Theatre Festival, popularly known as PANAFEST, held

annually since the mid-1980s, Ghana has sought ways to bring Africans on the continent and in the diaspora together around the issues raised by slavery, which remain suppressed.

Faced with daily reminders of the persistence of contemporary forms of slavery, we must commit to meaningful dialogue on this subject. We are of the view that, while greater commitment to existing international conventions will be crucial, our collective efforts to promote respect for the human rights, fundamental freedoms and dignity of all persons regardless of their race, colour, gender and religion, will be enhanced through continuing dialogue and better appreciation of cultural similarities, as well as differences.

More than 40 million people around the world in virtually every country remain trapped in modern-day slavery in the forms of forced labour, forced prostitution, human trafficking, child labour and forced marriages, with women accounting for 71 per cent of its victims. Failings in the migration system, particularly in fragile States and regions in conflict and crisis, have given rise to horrible stories of slavery-like practices that must be urgently addressed. Member States must commit to upholding the human dignity of all peoples and stamping out prejudice, racism and xenophobia in all their forms and manifestations. That is the only way in which we can ensure that never again will the world be confronted with the atrocity of the slave trade.

**Mr. Ndong Mba** (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to commend the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General for having convened this meeting to commemorate the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

I align myself with the statement delivered by Ambassador Mamadou Tangara of the Gambia in his capacity as Chair of the Group of African States for the month of March.

It is a distinct honour for me to speak on behalf of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea on this memorable occasion, on which we commemorate the abolition of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. When the fifteenth-century Portuguese explorer Fernando Po came to the island of Bioko, he was so amazed by the natural splendour of its surrounding bays to the north that he referred to it by two Portuguese words for "beautiful" — *formosa* and *bella*. When the English explorer Henry Morton Stanley arrived on that same island in 1884, he used the word "extraordinary" to describe Bioko's natural beauty. In Stanley's view, the island was the pearl of the Gulf of Guinea.

In addition to its natural beauty, it should be noted that during the period from 1471 to 1474, Equatorial Guinea was then being explored and exploited by the Portuguese, who appropriated vast areas of the Gulf of Guinea. The islands of Bioko and Annobon were in fact important ports of call for the slave trade. Black pearls — human pearls — were captured and exported to France, Spain and England prior to being sent to the Americas. For some, the volcanic peaks, the lush greenery of our tropical forests, our luxuriant landscapes and the black sand of Bioko might perhaps evoke the image of a tropical paradise, but for decades our people were subjected to the vilest exploitation of humankind by other humans. The slave trade — a grave human rights violation — became a large-scale, multinational operation. Certain practices of the black slave trade were even legalized in some countries. That same trade also contributed to the economic growth of the West. While under the control of Great Britain, the island of Fernando Po financed in part the United Kingdom's industrial revolution.

The truth is that the transatlantic slave trade caused incalculable suffering. Every one of the millions of individual victims had their personal story, family, dreams and hopes. Africans were treated as inferior beings. Trafficking was at the heart of deep structural inequalities at the economic and social levels. Those injustices and inequalities continue to affect people of African descent throughout the world. Member States must pursue their efforts in that regard. Accordingly, Equatorial Guinea welcomed the initiative taken by the Caribbean Community to erect a permanent memorial — *The Ark of Return* — to the creation of which Equatorial Guinea contributed $100,000.

Those who succumbed under the yoke of slavery had little in the way of refuge. They had their beliefs, drums and invincible will not to die. They ran the risk of losing their identity and their reason for living. Equatorial Guinea and its people, Government and Head of State, His Excellency Mr. Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, will always be proud to have contributed to creating that monument. By honouring with others the victims of slavery, we participated in restoring the dignity of those who had been dispossessed of everything. Heretofore, such a permanent memorial

at Headquarters will represent not only a powerful symbol for the education of future generations, but also an unequivocal reminder to all those who would prefer to forget. Equatorial Guinea is fully and unwaveringly committed to the duty to remember.

Our country pays tribute to the courage of those who succumbed under the yoke of slavery, and we celebrate their boldness. We celebrate Toussaint Louverture, Aimé Césaire, the Maroons and the brave fighters of Jamaica, Haiti, Peru and the entire African diaspora who rose up against humiliation — as the great Aimé Césaire depicted in his epic poem, *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* — and who fought as embodied in the figure of the Haitian woman, the symbol of our pride. We celebrate the memory of those who fought against such a terrible crime, grave intolerance and base injustice. We celebrate those who, through their creativity, contribute to the struggle, and we once again celebrate architect Rodney Leon, the artist who deftly created this historic masterpiece.

Equatorial Guinea takes this opportunity to express its gratitude to the United Nations for its work in combating slavery, without entering into a detailed analysis or assessment of what the international community has accomplished or failed to accomplish in that regard over the past several years.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea is very concerned about the instances of slavery and xenophobia that continue to arise in various areas of the globe, in particular the shocking cases in North Africa — for example in Libya — perpetrated by non-State actors. We believe that global peace and security cannot be fully achieved while slavery, xenophobia and racism persist. That is why we invite Governments to take greater steps to raise awareness of the dangers of such ills by implementing institutional reforms that would strengthen the behaviours and values of modern States in the minds of their people. The aim would be to reject persistent social discrimination of all kinds.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, I would like to point out that we are all part of the same large family — humankind. Whether from the Caribbean, Africa or other regions of the world, every year as we commemorate the abolition of slavery, we all declare "Never again".

**Mrs. Rodríguez Camejo** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Uruguay on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

We attach particular importance to the annual commemoration of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade — a particularly sensitive issue for the Cuban people. We supported resolutions 61/19 and 70/7 to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, designate 25 March as the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, and establish a permanent memorial in remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. More than 200 years have passed since the struggle for independence that began in the former American colonies ended slavery. Nonetheless, it would be an unforgivable historical mistake to disregard or claim to forget the past.

With the introduction of the slave trade into the Western hemisphere, the former colonial Powers committed a crime against humanity that is not time-bound. We must not forget the terrible fate of the millions of men, women and children who, for more than four centuries, were uprooted from their homelands in Africa and forcibly transported to the Americas. Those who benefited from the conquest, colonization, slavery and the slave trade must assume their responsibility and make reparations for the horrendous crimes they committed. It is crucial to comply with the provisions of the Durban Declaration, in particular with paragraphs 98 to 102, and of its Programme of Action, concerning the teaching and understanding of the truth about the tragedy, restoring dignity to the victims and providing reparation and compensation for the human damage caused.

We are increasingly concerned about the fact that slavery is not a phenomenon of the past. Almost 40 million people are subjected to similar conditions in the twenty-first century. It is painful to acknowledge that, as the International Labour Organization and other international agencies have warned, the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 8.7, will not be achieved unless efforts to eliminate modern slavery are drastically strengthened. Millions of women, men and children have become the victims of slavery and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. That is why we reiterate our call on the international community to adopt urgent measures to end contemporary forms of

slavery and other similar practices that constitute gross violations of human rights.

The theme of today's meeting — "Triumphs and struggles for freedom and equality" — recalls that this year marks the 227th anniversary of the beginning of the first victorious social revolution in Latin America and the Caribbean — the Haitian Revolution. Its main purpose was to end the egregious practice of slavery. The movement gained momentum in the other colonial territories of our America by incorporating the abolition of that inhumane practice into their aspirations for independence. That was also true in Cuba, where approximately 1.3 million Africans arrived as slaves. They and their descendants were key actors in the various stages of our struggle for freedom and contributed significantly to our nationality and culture. We inherited our fighting spirit and love for freedom from them.

Let today's commemoration encourage us not to forget the history and legacy of those who fought for our freedom and to remind the international community of its moral obligation to redress the crimes committed.

**Mr. De Souza Monteiro** (Brazil): We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of Uruguay on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

We will now speak in our national capacity. The remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade is a unique opportunity for a reflection on the present-day situation of people of African descent. Despite the many decades since the abolition of slavery, the discrimination and inequalities resulting from it remain very present. Disaggregated data shows that today, higher levels of poverty, social exclusion and violence affect people of African descent at disproportionally high levels.

The contribution of slaves and their descendants to the political, economic, social, cultural, religious and intellectual history of Brazil is remarkable. Having the world's largest population of African descent, our country is fully aware of its share of the responsibility in addressing the past and redressing injustice.

Since the 1988 Constitution, the Brazilian Government has evolved its understanding and policies regarding people of African descent. First, it recognized the right to land tenure and ownership for runaway slave communities, known as quilombos, in particular the Quilombo dos Palmares, which is a symbol of resistance that lasted almost 100 years. The Constitution also recognized the importance of acknowledging and protecting Afro-Brazilian culture. The recognition of capoeira as part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO is an indirect result of that change in mindset.

For the past 15 years, the Federal Government has worked with a special secretariat for the promotion of racial equality with the mandate of elaborating and implementing programmes aimed at improving the welfare and increasing the inclusiveness of ethnic communities, in particular those including African descendants. In the educational area, public financing programmes and quota systems have allowed a significant increase in the number of students of African descent in universities across the country. The biggest social protection programme in Brazil, the Programa Bolsa Familia, has benefited one of the most marginalized social stratum in the country — women of African descent. Although much progress has been made since the 1988 Constitution, undoubtedly much remains to be done. The Brazilian Government remains committed to overcoming the lingering effects of the transatlantic slave trade, both with general social protection policies and with specific and targeted affirmative actions.

Brazil has decided to join the Group of Friends of the Elimination of Racism, created last week under the leadership of South Africa and Belgium. We believe that that is a fundamental step forward. The United Nations system and Member States should be doing more to address the many challenges posed by the International Decade for People of African Descent, such as the negotiation of the international declaration of the rights of people of African descent and the establishment of the permanent forum on people of African descent. Too often, the issue of the rights of people of African descent is described as the priority of a single region. We would like to take this opportunity to underscore the importance of the engagement of every single country in the issue. It is true that the absolute numbers of people of African descent vary significantly across the globe. What seems to be unfortunately common, on the other hand, is the fact that black people suffer very similar trends of discrimination, which is undoubtedly a by-product of slavery. That statement is valid not only in the Americas, but also in other regions in the world.

Unfortunately, we are also witnessing concerning trends regarding multiple and intersecting forms with discrimination. Often, people of African descent suffer additional discrimination related to Islamophobia and xenophobia. The issue of the International Decade for People of African Descent is therefore not a priority of any one particular region. It should be considered by all countries as a unique opportunity to combat racial discrimination and address the socioeconomic by-products of the transatlantic slave trade.

In conclusion, let me once again reiterate Brazil's appreciation for the leadership of the Caribbean Community and others in erecting the permanent memorial of the slave trade — *The Ark of Return* — a daily reminder that inspires all representatives and visitors who enter the General Assembly building in New York City.

**The Acting President**: We have heard the last speaker in this commemorative meeting. The Assembly has thus concluded the commemorative meeting on the occasion of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to conclude its consideration of agenda item 119?

*It was so decided.*

**Agenda item 7** (*continued*)

**Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items**

**The Acting President**: I now call the attention of the General Assembly to draft decision A/72/L.44, circulated under sub-item (cc) of agenda item 99, entitled "Follow-up to the 2013 high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament".

Members will recall that the Assembly concluded consideration of agenda item 99 as a whole at its 76th plenary meeting, on 24 December 2017. In order for the Assembly to take action on the draft decision, it will be necessary to reopen consideration of the sub-item.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to reopen consideration of sub-item (cc) of agenda item 99?

*It was so decided.*

**Agenda item 99** (*continued*)

**General and complete disarmament**

**(cc) Follow-up to the 2013 high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament**

**Draft decision (A/72/L.44)**

**The Acting President**: Members will further recall that at its second plenary meeting, on 15 September 2017, the General Assembly decided to allocate sub-item (cc) of agenda item 99 to the First Committee. To enable the General Assembly to take action expeditiously on the document, may I take it that the Assembly wishes to consider sub-item (cc) of agenda item 99 directly in plenary meeting and proceed immediately to its consideration?

*It was so decided.*

**The Acting President**: I now give the floor to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to introduce draft decision A/72/L.44.

**Mr. Suárez Moreno** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to speak on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries to briefly introduce draft decision A/72/L.44.

As we are all aware, on 24 December 2017 the General Assembly adopted resolution 72/251, by which it decided to organize a United Nations high-level international conference on nuclear disarmament from 14 to 16 May, the purpose of which will be to assess progress made in the area of nuclear disarmament as a follow-up to the General Assembly high-level meeting on nuclear disarmament held in 2013. Resolution 72/251 also envisages a one-day series of meetings for the organization of such an international conference, to be held on 28 March.

Based on consultations held among several States Members of the Organization, including the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries — the primary proponents of resolution 72/251 and of convening the aforementioned international conference — it was decided to submit to the General Assembly for its consideration draft decision A/72/L.44, which would postpone the organizational meeting until 10 May. We believe that such a delay is necessary in order to provide Member States with sufficient time to carefully prepare all the details for the eventual organizational meeting so as to ensure the successful and constructive outcome

of this important international conference on nuclear disarmament, as well as greater participation at the highest possible level.

In that regard, with the hope that it can count on the support of all States Members of the Organization for the adoption of the draft decision, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm its principled position on nuclear disarmament, which, together with the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects, continues to be its highest priority.

**The Acting President**: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft decision A/72/L.44, entitled "Organizational meeting of the United Nations high-level international conference on nuclear disarmament". May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt it?

*Draft decision A/72/L.44 was adopted* (decision 72/553).

**The Acting President**: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (cc) of agenda item 99.

*The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.*

United Nations A/72/PV.81

# General Assembly

Seventy-second session

*Official Records*

**81**st plenary meeting
Wednesday, 4 April 2018, 3 p.m.
New York

*President*: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

*In the absence of the President, Mrs. Pobee (Ghana), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

**Agenda item 127** (*continued*)

**Global health and foreign policy**

**Draft resolution (A/72/L.40)**

**Report of the Fifth Committee (A/72/811)**

**The Acting President**: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/72/L.40, entitled "Scope, modalities, format and organization of the high-level meeting on the fight against tuberculosis". May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution?

*Draft resolution A/72/L.40 was adopted* (resolution 72/268).

**The Acting President**: I would like to express my sincere thanks to Ambassador Walton Alfonso Webson of Antigua and Barbuda and Ambassador Koro Bessho of Japan, the co-facilitators of the informal consultations, who demonstrated great ability and patience in their conduct of the discussion and complex negotiations on the draft resolution. I also thank Member States for their valuable contributions to reaching an agreement on resolution 72/268.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 127.

**Reports of the Fifth Committee**

**The President**: The General Assembly will now consider the reports of the Fifth Committee on agenda items 136, 142, 148 and 134.

I request the Rapporteur of the Fifth Committee, Mr. Felipe García Landa of Mexico, to introduce in one intervention the reports of the Fifth Committee before the Assembly.

**Mr. García Landa** (Mexico), Rapporteur of the Fifth Committee (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to introduce to the General Assembly the reports of the Fifth Committee containing recommendations on issues considered during the first part of the resumed seventy-second session of the General Assembly. The Fifth Committee met from 14 to 29 March and held five plenary meetings, as well as numerous informal consultations.

Let me now present the reports of the Fifth Committee, containing recommendations on issues that require action by the General Assembly.

Under agenda item 136, "Programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019", the Committee provides advice to the General Assembly on programme budget implications should it adopt draft resolution A/72/L.40. The relevant report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/72/811.

Under the same agenda item, in paragraph 6 of its report contained in document A/72/681/Add.1, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution on special subjects relating

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to the programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019, which was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

Under agenda item 142, "Joint Inspection Unit", in paragraph 6 of its report contained in document A/72/810, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution that was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

On agenda item 148, "Financing of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals", in paragraph 6 of its report contained in document A/72/669/Add.1, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution that was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

Finally, on agenda item 134, "Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations", in paragraph 5 of its report contained in document A/72/682/Add.1, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft decision entitled "Questions deferred for future consideration", which was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

I thank delegations for their cooperation during this session and for the spirit of compromise that enabled the Committee to finish its work on time.

I would also like to thank the Chair of the Committee, Ambassador Tommo Monthe, for his guidance and encouragement. I look forward to working with him and my colleagues of the Bureau to ensure the success of the second part of the resumed session, which will take place in May, the agenda of which includes issues of great importance to the Organization.

**The Acting President**: I thank the Rapporteur of the Fifth Committee.

The positions of delegations regarding the recommendations of the Fifth Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records.

If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the reports of the Fifth Committee that are before the Assembly today.

*It was so decided.*

**The Acting President**: Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote.

May I remind members that, under paragraph 7 of decision 34/401, the General Assembly agreed that:

> "When the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, i.e., either in the Committee or in plenary meeting, unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee."

May I further remind delegations that, also in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendations contained in the reports of the Fifth Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take decisions in the same manner as was done in the Committee, unless the Secretariat is notified to the contrary in advance. That means that, where recorded votes were taken, we will do the same. I also hope that we may proceed to adopt without a vote those recommendations that were adopted without a vote in the Fifth Committee.

**Agenda item 136** (*continued*)

**Programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019**

**Report of the Fifth Committee (A/72/681/Add.1)**

**The Acting President**: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution entitled "Special subjects relating to the programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019", recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report.

We will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

*The draft resolution was adopted* (resolution 72/262 B).

**The Acting President**: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 136.

**Agenda item 142**

**Joint Inspection Unit**

**Report of the Fifth Committee (A/72/810)**

**The Acting President**: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report.

We will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

*The draft resolution was adopted* (resolution 72/269).

**The Acting President**: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 142.

**Agenda item 148** (*continued*)

**Financing of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals**

**Report of the Fifth Committee (A/72/669/Add.1)**

**The Acting President**: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution entitled "Construction of a new facility for the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, Arusha branch", recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

*The draft resolution was adopted* (resolution 72/270).

**The Acting President**: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 148.

**Agenda item 134** (*continued*)

**Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations**

**Report of the Fifth Committee (A/72/682/Add.1)**

**The Acting President**: The Assembly has before it a draft decision entitled "Questions deferred for future consideration", recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 5 of its report.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

*The draft decision was adopted* (decision 72/547 B).

**The Acting President**: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 134.

The General Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of all the reports of the Fifth Committee before it for this meeting.

*The meeting rose at 3.20 p.m.*

United Nations A/72/PV.82

# General Assembly

Seventy-second session

*Official Records*

**82**nd plenary meeting
Thursday, 12 April 2018, 10 a.m.
New York

*President*: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Perera (Sri Lanka), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

**Agenda item 12**

**Improving global road safety**

**Note by the Secretary-General (A/72/359)**

**Draft resolution (A/72/L.48)**

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed.

**The Deputy Secretary-General**: I am very pleased to join Member States today to speak on an extremely important subject — the debate on road safety.

Road traffic deaths and injuries have become a serious and urgent global concern. Every year, some 1.3 million drivers, passengers and pedestrians die and up to 50 million people are injured on the world's roads. Traffic accidents are the primary cause of death of young people and are responsible for keeping millions of people in poverty each year.

In the past week alone, we have been reminded of the deeply distressing personal realities behind such stories. Tragic road accidents in Canada and India, to name but two countries, have left families and communities utterly distraught. I would like to convey my sincere condolences to all those affected by the events.

Draft resolution A/72/L.48, under this agenda item, recognizes that the number of accidents globally remains unacceptably high and that, at the current rate of progress, target 3.6 of the Sustainable Development Goals — to halve, by 2020, the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents — will not be met. I thank the Russian Federation, as the main sponsor of the draft resolution, and all Member States for highlighting that tragic and preventable situation and for setting out a series of steps to address it.

Looking ahead, it is important to recognize the projected increase in urbanization, motorization, infrastructure development and vehicle ownership around the world. We must put in place measures to prevent road traffic fatalities and injuries, which continue to take an increasing toll. The proposed third Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety, to be held in Sweden in 2020, can make an important contribution.

In addition, following the General Assembly's request to the Secretary-General, I am pleased to report that the United Nations Road Safety Trust Fund has now been established to support the implementation of the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 and the road-safety-related Sustainable Development Goals.

Reaching that point has involved a significant journey by many. I thank the Economic Commission for Europe and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Road Safety, Mr. Jean Todt, for their commitment and leadership. I would also like to thank other partners of the United Nations system, Member States, civil

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society and additional stakeholders for their support, and I would like to acknowledge those private-sector entities that have pledged initial contributions to the United Nations Road Safety Trust Fund for their time in helping us to shape those ambitions.

We must now begin to pool our resources and expertise to make a real impression on our global targets during the remaining three years of the Decade of Action for Road Safety and the duration of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

With the draft resolution submitted under this item and the establishment of the United Nations Road Safety Trust Fund, there is a new opportunity to ensure synergy, efficiency and coordinated action towards results on the ground. With it, we have a real chance to save millions of lives around the world and to prevent injuries, suffering and the loss of opportunity associated with road accidents. I call on all road safety stakeholders, including Member States, to contribute to the Fund and to step up efforts towards achieving our global road safety targets.

**The Acting President:** I thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her statement.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation to introduce draft resolution A/72/L.48.

**Mr. Gorovoy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Road safety has been and remains one of the most pressing issues facing modern society. Deaths and injuries resulting from road traffic accidents have a negative impact on the socioeconomic progress and sustainable development of States.

It is important that the topic of road safety not only has firmly taken its place on the agenda of General Assembly but also has become an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The incorporation of the corresponding targets of the relevant Sustainable Development Goals demonstrates the international community's acknowledgement of the need for coordinated action in this area.

We have consistently implemented a range of measures to improve road safety in Russia. That work is taking place pursuant to the decisions of the President and the Government of the Russian Federation on the basis of the federal target programme on improving road safety until 2020 and the road safety strategy for the Russian Federation, adopted by the Government six weeks ago. We are focusing on six priority key areas, including nurturing a culture of ethics of road users and the proper level of legal awareness, increasing the safety of children and pedestrians to protect them from accidents and the related consequences, and developing a system for assistance to victims. As part of the implementation of innovative projects, new opportunities are emerging to make road traffic safer, including by minimizing the influence of the human factor on the functioning of the various systems.

Thanks to the measures taken, the number of road traffic deaths has decreased by one third over the past six years. At the same time, we have succeeded in reducing the mortality rate of vulnerable road users, namely, among minors by a quarter, among pedestrians by a third and among motorcyclists by half. This progress has been made in the context of a steep increase in the number of vehicles, which grew by 20 per cent over the same period of time. There are now 55 million vehicles on the road.

International cooperation in the area of road safety has been significantly strengthened since the inclusion of the item on road safety on the agenda of the General Assembly at the initiative of Oman in 2003. As a follow-up to the decisions of the first Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety, held in Moscow in 2009, the General Assembly declared the period from 2011 to 2020 as the Decade of Action for Road Safety.

The process of the practical implementation of steps for integrating the Decade of Action within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals began after the second Conference, held in Brasilia in 2015. It led to the launch of large-scale actions to stabilize and subsequently reduce projected road traffic accident mortality rates. We would also like to highlight the special role of the United Nations Special Envoy for Road Safety, Mr. Jean Todt, in the implementation of those initiatives.

We also welcome the decision of the Secretary-General to establish the Road Safety Trust Fund. Decisive steps have already been taken by the international community and have yielded positive results. Therefore, over the past few years in many States, we have witnessed a decrease in mortality and injury rates resulting from road traffic accidents. However, much remains to be done. It is for that reason that Russia is honoured to put forward its draft resolution entitled "Improving global road safety" (A/72/L.48).

The draft resolution is based on relevant General Assembly resolutions and reflects the achievements made by the international community on the issue of road safety. It focuses on strengthening multilateral cooperation with the aim of reducing the number of road traffic injuries. It highlights the fact that an effective response to global road safety challenges is feasible only if all stakeholders participate, including the private sector and civil society. It commends the efforts undertaken by international organizations within the United Nations system. The draft resolution welcomes the steps taken by Member States to accede to the relevant international legal instruments and to develop a comprehensive national legislative framework in the area of road safety, while taking into account the major risk factors. It also welcomes the attention given to the link between road safety and sustainable mobility in the New Urban Agenda — Habitat III. Particular reference is also made to the activities undertaken during the fourth United Nations Global Road Safety Week, where emphasis was placed on excessive speed as a primary risk factor.

The text calls on all States Members of the United Nations to use the 12 global targets for road safety risk factors, which were developed by the World Health Organization to monitor progress nationally, globally and regionally. The draft resolution welcomes the offer by the Government of Sweden to host the third Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety in 2020 to review the progress made in achieving the Decade of Action objectives. At that event, we expect that the set of measures adopted as part of the Decade of Action will be reviewed and progress towards achieving target 3.6 assessed. We would like to inform our Swedish colleagues that our country is ready to provide any additional assistance needed in organizing and holding the conference, and we wish them every success.

We express our sincere gratitude to all delegations that contributed to the consultations that led to agreement on the draft resolution, as well as to all interested parties. We would like to thank our colleagues at the World Health Organization and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe for their considerable contributions to our common cause. We urge all Member States to support the draft resolution and invite them to become sponsors.

**The Acting President**: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

**Mr. Van Den Akker** (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The European Union welcomes the upcoming adoption by consensus of the draft resolution entitled "Improving global road safety" (A/72/L.48). We would like in particular to thank the Russian Federation and commend it on its leadership and efforts to facilitate that outcome.

Every year 50 million people are injured because of road traffic accidents, which are a leading cause of death globally and the main cause of death among those between the ages of 15 and 29. That situation is unacceptable, and it shows that our road transport systems around the world are inherently unsafe and that one human mistake can lead to disaster for individuals, families and societies.

Europe has taken a clear stand on this major health problem. According to our white paper on transport, by 2050 Europe will move closer to the goal of zero fatalities on the road — a clear vision that will not be achieved overnight. A system of intermediate, voluntary targets and safety indicators is a useful tool to guide our efforts along the way. To that end, we agreed on the Sustainable Development Goals in September 2015, including target 3.6, which aims to halve the global number of death and injuries from road traffic accidents by 2020. In that regard, the upcoming third Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety, to be held in Sweden in 2020, coinciding with the end of the Decade of Action on Road Safety and the period leading up to 2030, the establishment of the United Nations Road Safety Trust Fund, which will be launched today, and the draft resolution on improving global road safety offer a clear and recent illustration of ongoing international efforts to achieve our challenging goals.

To prevent road traffic injuries and develop a safe road transport system, we need a comprehensive and holistic approach with the involvement of all stakeholders. The European road safety policy framework for the period 2011-2020, which guides our efforts towards contributing to safer roads, is a good example. It focuses on new key priorities such as reducing the number of accidents on rural roads and those involving vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists, children and the elderly. In addition, we build on previous commitments to strengthen controls and penalties, support national initiatives to combat driving under the influence of

alcohol and drugs, invest in road infrastructure and improve traffic conditions, legislation on driving licenses and fitness standards for driving. Such measures have resulted in a 20 per cent reduction in the number of road fatalities between 2010 and 2017.

Even if the regional road fatality rate in the European Union is the lowest worldwide, it remains unacceptable. We are committed to reinforcing our efforts, as European Union Transport Ministers clearly demonstrated in March 2017 in the Valletta Declaration on Improving Road Safety. That political impetus is guiding our work on a new ambitious policy framework for period 2020-2030. We must continue to share best practices and exchange information at the national, regional and global levels, with the active participation of civil society and the private sector.

We must also strengthen our efforts to integrate safety into a broader agenda of sustainable cities and transport. We know the main killers on the roads — inappropriate speed, drunken driving, distraction and the failure to wear a seatbelt. To make roads safer, work is needed on safer road infrastructure, safer vehicles and safer road users. That includes the implementation and the enforcement of adequate laws, but also soft measures such as awareness-raising and education efforts.

Although road traffic injuries are a major public health problem and the challenges sometimes feel overwhelming, we believe that there is hope. Many countries around the world have already shown that it is possible, through a holistic and multisectoral approach, to prevent people from being killed or seriously injured in road traffic. Let us build on those experiences. We cannot afford to be complacent on road safety. Millions of human lives are at stake.

**Ms. Picco** (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): Too many people are killed on the roads. It is a violent and silent epidemic that takes the lives of children going to school and of innocent people, their lives taken away by persons driving under the influence of alcohol or drivers of vehicles that should not be on the road. More than 1 million lives are lost every year. To that are added tens of millions of injured, many of whom will be left disabled. Road accidents are the main cause of death among young people aged 15 to 29 of years, and almost half of the people killed on roads are vulnerable users.

Another alarming statistic is the gap between high-income countries and low- or middle-income countries, where 90 per cent of the deaths due to road accidents take place although they account for only 54 per cent of the vehicles in circulation worldwide. We therefore emphasize the importance of the draft resolution (A/72/L.48) that we will adopt later, which Monaco has co-sponsored and which calls for working to improve road infrastructure, enhance vehicle safety, change the dangerous behaviour of road users, increase capacity to respond to accidents, and, for those countries that have not yet done so, to adhere to and implement fully the relevant United Nations legal instruments.

We commend the exemplary commitment of the Special Envoy for Road Safety, whose efforts led to the establishment of the United Nations Road Safety Trust Fund. That is a new tool that will allow us to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals connected to road security and to encourage all actors to take part in the effort.

The global status report on road safety (see A/72/359) submitted by World Health Organization (WHO) takes stock of the results obtained by various actors in efforts to achieve the goals of the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020, ahead of our meeting in Sweden in 2020. Monaco emphasizes in particular the relevance of the recommendations made by WHO encouraging Member States to do more, including strengthening legislation, investing in innovative technological solutions, both in terms of infrastructure and transport systems, and improving the quality of data on road safety by implementing strategies that focus on vulnerable road users.

Monaco shares the conclusion of the report that urges States to deal comprehensively with road safety. My country prioritizes prevention and first and foremost the education of future users. For that reason, Monaco's authorities pay special attention to educating all types of road users about the risks and applicable rules. That teaching is mandatory and is part of the curriculum in schools from secondary school. It is also a way to recall the significant vulnerability of certain categories of users, in particular pedestrians, cyclists or drivers of two-wheeled vehicles, which young people are the first to use. With those actions, the Government of Monaco aims to foster an understanding of the relationship between regulations, risks and accidents. Moreover, the Government attaches great importance to compliance with traffic regulations and actively fights all manner of disrespect on the road. That is why the authorities have developed a robust legal arsenal,

which was recently strengthened, to punish offenders. Monaco also severely penalizes users who behave in a dangerous manner, including driving under the influence of alcohol or psychoactive substances.

Regulating traffic is a major challenge for road safety, at both the national and international levels. The increase in the world population and daily commuting have put our countries and cities and their infrastructure under increasing pressure. That is a daily concern for my country, where the influx of people increases daily because of the number of people coming in to work. In that regard, my country is implementing considerable measures to develop innovative and flexible solutions to make our roads safer. Because our territory is a small one, soft mobility is prioritized. The Government launched a programme in 2017 to identify so-called smart city solutions. The Government has appointed an interministerial delegation responsible for the digital transition. Technology should facilitate the control of road flows, offer alternatives to users and manage cases of emergencies and accidents, thereby making our infrastructure safer and more responsive.

Monaco also supports many initiatives and projects aimed at testing, improving and promoting methods of transport for the future. At this very moment, and as it has done since 2006, Monaco is hosting the Ecologic Vehicles-Renewable Energies exhibition, which brings together many actors in the soft mobility sector to share knowledge and reflect on solutions for the future.

Anyone who has been a road accident victim can attest to the extent to which words must be followed by actions where road safety is concerned. Road accidents cost most countries 3 per cent of their gross national product. Road safety policies are therefore not just a public safety need, but an invaluable investment. Our commitment cannot focus on a single aspect but on all of its components, namely, infrastructure, vehicles, users and post-accident care. The realization of the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety, which we proclaimed in 2010, is an imperative need for every State represented in this Hall and, for each of us, a pressing need.

**Mr. Bausch** (Luxembourg): According to the 2015 statistics of the World Health Organization, 3,400 people will not make it home tonight. Why? Simply because they had the bad luck to be killed in a car crash. That is 3,400 human souls who will not come home to say good night to their kids, wives, husbands, parents or friends. In less than 200 days, the population of my home country, Luxembourg, would be erased completely.

Road safety is a global public health issue, a universal responsibility and, hence, an international challenge for all of us. Road safety is an issue that affects each and every one of us no matter what language we speak, where we are from or what social class we might fall into. Whether we are pedestrians, cyclists, drivers or passengers, road safety is a common challenge. Therefore, it is a great honour for me to speak in front of an audience representing the United Nations. To be candid, road safety is too important for us to be modest or to act humbly. Throughout history, New York has never been a place for small actions. Let me say it very clearly: I have a goal that cannot be negotiated or questioned, a goal that means nothing else than zero fatalities and zero severely injured in road traffic.

During In the 1970s, Luxembourg recorded more than 100 road fatalities per year. Through a number of serious repressive measures, such as introducing the demerit-point driving-license system; declaring war on the use of alcohol and drugs while driving; enhancing driver training, in particular by implementing post-licensing measures for novice drivers; improving the network of roads; introducing an efficient periodic technical vehicle inspection; and launching awareness-raising campaigns on a regular basis, we managed to reduce the number of fatalities to 32 in 2010, meaning a decrease of 68 per cent. The first figures I had to present as a newly appointed Minister for Transport in 2013 showed an increase in the number of fatalities to 45 — a 41 per cent increase as compared with 2019. The main cause was still exceeding speed limits or inappropriate speed. I did not hesitate for a single moment. I aimed high and took bold action by introducing speed cameras in Luxembourg. Human error, be it speed, fatigue, drunken driving or the use of mobile phones and other devices, are the main factors in road traffic collisions in Luxembourg, as well as in most other countries. They are common challenges, but there is no need to reinvent the wheel.

The current Government of Luxembourg launched a road safety action plan in 2015 comprising 29 measures — a mixture of prevention and repression — aiming to tackle the reasons behind road accidents, one by one. The core measures consist of a reinforcement of the demerit-point system and of the fines and safety measures related to road infrastructure, residential areas, 30-kilometre-per-hour zones, shared

spaces, safer crosswalks, bicycle lanes and road safety audits — broadly speaking, the design of the streets. In less than four years, the number of road fatalities dropped to 25 people, that is to say, from 45 people in 2013 to 25 in 2017, which shows that political courage saves lives.

But despite that encouraging trend in road fatalities, efforts must continue, because every death and serious injury on the road is one too many. I have a goal that I keep believing in. I know that nothing comes from belief alone, but we can and will reach this figure. The United Nations has a clear target — to halve the number of road deaths and serious injuries by 2020, even though reaching that target has become very challenging. My vision remains zero fatalities and zero seriously injured by road traffic, not only in my country but all over the world. The heartache, the human suffering and the misery must come to an end. Let us do it together. Let us aim high, work hard and dream big.

**Ms. Rawet** (Sweden): Sweden fully aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union and would like to make some additional remarks in its national capacity.

First, let me congratulate the General Assembly in advance for adopting the draft resolution on improving global road safety (A/72/L.48). I would also like to thank the Russian Federation for its leadership and efforts in facilitating the draft resolution.

More than 1.3 million people are killed each year in road traffic accidents, with 50 million injured. Ninety per cent of those casualties take place in developing countries, leading to increased poverty for many who are already poor. Road traffic incidents are the main cause of death for young people between 15 and 29 years of age and therefore constitute a huge challenge for our society today.

However, road safety is one of the areas where working together at the United Nations can deliver tangible results. Today we have made such a contribution. The adoption of this draft will be an important step not only in promoting work on road safety, but also in bringing about a sustainable society and achieving the Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

First, I would like to express Sweden's strong support for the guidelines set up in the draft resolution. We hope that it will motivate Member States and other stakeholders in their work on road safety. I also hope that it will pave the way for more focused and concrete work on road safety, with a better set of tools.

Secondly, let me also express our gratitude to one and all for welcoming the offer from Sweden to host the third Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety in 2020, as mentioned in the draft resolution. Before the agenda is set for the conference, we will make sure that all stakeholders concerned are consulted on their views on how to achieve progress, starting with the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration this afternoon. Sweden seeks to continue the important work of the first United Nations Global Road Safety Week in Muscat in 2007, and the two successful first high-level conferences on road safety — the first in Moscow in 2009 and the second in Brasilia in 2015.

The third high-level conference will bring together delegations of ministers and representatives dealing with transportation, health, education, safety and related traffic law enforcement issues, as well as business leaders, non-governmental organizations, members of academia and international organizations, that is, all relevant stakeholders with an interest in reducing or eliminating road traffic fatalities and serious injuries.

The aim of the conference will be to review the progress in achieving the goals of the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 and the relevant targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as to provide an opportunity for Member States to further discuss ways to achieve the goals of the Agenda. An important task for the conference will also be to prepare a forward-looking declaration on the period leading up to 2030.

In conclusion, since 1997 Sweden has continuously worked according to our Vision Zero th t no one will be killed or seriously injured in traffic. We have learned many things along the way. Perhaps the most important lesson is the need to collaborate holistically and systematically, in a multi-sectoral approach and with all stakeholders concerned at all levels of society.

There is much that can be said on road safety, there are interesting experiences to be shared and most of all, there is important work to be done. Let us get to work as soon as possible. Therefore, I will conclude by thanking one and all once again, and I would like to extend to everyone a warm welcome to Sweden and to the third Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety, in 2020.

**Mr. Al Mughairi** (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank the Russian Federation for its efforts leading to the adoption later today of draft resolution A/72/L.48. I would also like to thank all delegations that took part in the consultations and in the relevant meetings. Finally, I would like to pay tribute to the constructive efforts of the international community in this area.

Each year, 1.25 million people die in road accidents, which are the main cause of death for young people in the 15-29 age group. Others, too, lose their lives in such accidents. In 2011, the United Nations proclaimed 2011–2020 as the Decade of Action for Road Safety. In September 2015, that goal was supplemented by the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially with regard to safety, calling for a 50 per cent reduction of accidents. Our delegation voted for that resolution in order to complement the role of the Sultanate of Oman in the area of road safety. The Sultanate of Oman took the lead in suggesting this topic at the United Nations in 2003 and played a role in organizing the first United Nations Road Safety Week in 2007.

The efforts made by the Government of my country, the private sector and civil society in the Sultanate of Oman, along with the increased awareness among all segments of our society, led to positive results in the area of road safety. Statistics show that despite the growing number of cars on the road in Oman, the decline in the number of road accidents continued, from the decrease of 5 per cent registered in 2013 to a decrease of 25 per cent in 2016. That reduction led to a 45 per cent drop in road traffic deaths from 2012 to 2016, for which we thank God.

Our Ministry of Transport and Communications has implemented road projects that meet modern requirements and are environmentally friendly and consistent with safety requirements by road users. It has adopted laws to organize the road transport process. During this period, the Ministry has been implementing a master plan for public transportation in the Sultanate of Oman, in order to provide a complete system that serves all segments of society according to quality standards. The aim is to reduce traffic congestion, gas consumption and environmental effects.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my thanks to the President of the General Assembly and to the Secretary-General. We hope to improve road safety by strengthening international efforts, with the aim of working together to achieve our common goal of protecting human lives.

**Prince Michael of Kent** (United Kingdom): I am delighted to be representing the United Kingdom in this important and timely debate. I am very grateful to the British Government for the opportunity to address the General Assembly on road safety, which for many years has been a strong concern of mine. Already in this twenty-first century more than 20 million people have been killed and many millions more seriously injured in road accidents around the world. According to the World Health Organization, every day 3,500 lives are lost in road accidents that are predictable and preventable. That is far too heavy a price to pay for our essential mobility.

In Britain today, we are fortunate to have one of the safest road networks in the world. That is not just a matter of luck. It has come about through difficult and at times bitter experience. In 1931, when our highway code was first introduced, we had only 2.3 million motor vehicles on our roads, but we lost more than 7,000 people in traffic crashes. Today there are 38 million motor vehicles in Britain, and we are losing each year just over 1,700 people. However, that is still far too many, and we share the determination of all the Member States participating in this debate to further reduce those figures.

Our experience over many decades shows that there is nothing inevitable about rising levels of road casualties, but that to improve road safety requires action on all fronts. We need safer roads, safer vehicles and safer road users. We came to recognize the combined benefits of all three areas painfully slowly. Our early attempts to educate drivers to be safer were not effective until we backed them up with strong enforcement. Similarly, the design of our roads has been made much safer through advanced engineering, and the safety of vehicles has been dramatically improved by the fitment of life-saving technologies, such as seat belts, air bags and electronic stability control. All countries can benefit from adopting a similar integrated approach, but adapted to their own traffic conditions and the profile of injuries.

A powerful example has been Britain's successful experience with seat belts. They were first required to be fitted in cars in 1967, but wearing rates remained low. Educational campaigns were launched in the 1970s to

encourage seat-belt use and raised rates to about 40 per cent. Then in the early 1980s, as a result of a cross-party initiatives by members of Parliament, wearing seat belts became compulsory. I am delighted that joining the British delegation in the Hall today is one of the members of Parliament who led that life-saving campaign, Mr. Barry Sheerman, MP. Today Britain's seat-belt wearing is above 94 per cent, and tens of thousands of lives have been saved.

Britain still faces the challenge of how to further reduce the toll. In 2015, the United Kingdom Department of Transport released a new road safety strategy, entitled "Working together to build a safer road system". It sets out the Government's vision, values and priorities for improving the safety of Britain's roads. Recent initiatives flowing from that strategy are policies to encourage cycling and walking so as to reduce car dependency, and investment in the future deployment of autonomous vehicles.

One important aspect of Britain's road safety policy is our international engagement, especially through the United Nations. We actively support the work of the World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations and the Global Forum for Road Traffic Safety, both hosted by the Economic Commission for Europe in Geneva. It is vital that more countries adhere to the United Nations road safety norms and standards, and we commend the efforts being made by the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Road Safety, Mr. Jean Todt, to encourage more Governments to become contracting parties.

Our Government's Department for International Development is also active in road safety, serving as a donor to the World Bank's Global Road Safety Facility, which is currently chaired by a senior official of that Department. It would be to everyone's advantage to establish close cooperation between the Facility and the newly proposed United Nations Road Safety Trust Fund.

Britain has also been a dynamic contributor to global road safety through the efforts of its independent charitable sector. In 2001, the International Automobile Foundation was registered as a United Kingdom charity with a permanent endowment of $300 million. Since then the Foundation has supported some very powerful initiatives. Those include the Commission for Global Road Safety, of which at one point I was patron, which led the call for a United Nations decade of action and for the inclusion of road safety in the Sustainable Development Goals. It included the World Bank's Global Road Safety Facility, which serves as a donor-coordination mechanism for the road-safety activities of the multilateral development banks; the Global New Car Assessment Programme, which provides a platform for cooperation among consumer crash-test and rating systems worldwide; and the Global Initiative for Child Health and Mobility, which is an innovative coalition promoting the objective of safe and healthy journeys to school for all children by 2030.

The FIA Foundation has supported all of these initiatives. I am very familiar with them because the Foundation, the World Bank Facility and the Global New Car Assessment Programme have all been recipients of my international road-safety awards, which I set up 30 years ago to recognize outstanding achievements in road-injury prevention.

There is always a need to shine a spotlight on our road-safety successes to act as an incentive to others. The need for effective road-injury prevention has never been more pressing. I would also like to highlight the work of another British charity, the Towards Zero Foundation, on which I serve as patron. The Foundation hosts the Global Network for Road Safety Legislators, which was launched in London in 2016. The Network encourages the exchange of best practices in road safety policies and laws among parliamentarians, and I am delighted that Barry Sheerman, M.P., whom I mentioned earlier, is leading a high-level delegation of 14 members of Parliament from different countries to this debate of the General Assembly and for a meeting later today of the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration.

Finally, I would like to welcome the offer made by the Government of Sweden to host the third high-level global ministerial meeting on road safety. This important event will not only mark the end of the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011–2020 but will also lead to a new level of global commitment to road-injury prevention. The Decade of Action was launched with the aim of stabilizing and then reducing the level of road fatalities, but at best we can say that there has been some stabilization but not yet any significant reduction. We know that the Sustainable Development Goal target to halve road deaths and injuries by 2020 will not be met, so now is the time to redouble our efforts and use the last two years of the United Nations Decade to set a new path of road-safety progress for 2030.

**Mr. O'Brien** (Australia): Road traffic accidents place a heavy burden on communities and economies globally. Since Australia co-sponsored the General Assembly resolution establishing the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011–2020 (resolution 64/255), we have been proud to support global efforts to address road safety. Today we are pleased to sponsor the draft resolution entitled "Improving global road safety" (A/72/L.48).

Australia welcomed the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly the inclusion of specific targets relating to road safety. We recognize the importance of setting ambitious targets to reduce deaths and injuries from road crashes. This year's draft resolution on improving global road safety expresses a concern that at the current rate of progress, the target to halve global deaths and injuries by 2020 will not be met. We need to pick up the pace to improve road safety.

Australia welcomes the development of voluntary global performance targets and corresponding indicators for road safety and is participating in this process. We have adopted a safe-systems approach to road safety through our national road-safety strategy, and we are always willing to share our experience and to learn from others. We recognize the need to work with countries in our region and the mutual benefits that come from sharing knowledge.

To signify our leadership on this issue in our region, we hosted a launch event at the Sydney Opera House for the United Nations Global Road Safety Week in 2017, on behalf of the World Health Organization's Western Pacific region.

Australia strongly supports the call made by the General Assembly for member States to scale up action on all areas of road safety, including through the implementation of strong legislation, addressing key factors, improving infrastructure by targeting the roads with the highest volumes and high crash rates, and improving the quality of data so that we can monitor progress.

**Mr. Candu** (Republic of Moldova): I am honoured to address the Assembly and to commend the efforts of the countries that are pioneers in the area of global road safety and strive to keep the attention of the international community and the United Nations focused on this issue. I would also like to welcome the report of the Secretary-General (see A/72/359), which highlights the important efforts made by various bodies and organizations of the United Nations system, in partnership with other stakeholders, to tackle the critical challenges in the area of road safety, which affect all countries, in particular developing ones.

I am honoured to stand at this rostrum today as the Moldova Road Safety Ambassador appointed by the Eastern Alliance for Safe and Sustainable Transport. While I am delighted by this distinction, I also view it as a great responsibility involving championing partnerships and greater financial mobilization internationally as well as spearheading comprehensive legislative and public awareness-measures in my own country, the Republic of Moldova.

As we approach the conclusion of the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 and its Global Plan, we can see that a great deal of positive progress has been made, marked by several regional and global initiatives for road safety. However, there is still little room for complacency, and we need to remain diligent and committed to saving lives in the area of road traffic, a goal that is absolutely in our power to achieve.

We all know the figures, and they are unsettling. The lives of nearly 1.3 million people are lost in traffic crashes every year. This is a leading cause of death, especially among young people. Without resolute measures, the projections for the future are even grimmer, as more people are going to be affected. This means that the road-safety-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals, which aim to halve, by 2020, the number of global deaths and injuries from road-traffic accidents, will not only be missed but also totally compromised.

However, this trend can be prevented through legislative measures, observing basic safety standards in the car industry and good road design and traffic management, as well as public awareness and education. Building international partnerships and ensuring adequate funding to support these measures and fight the scourge of traffic fatalities will be also instrumental. Therefore, our gathering here today is an opportunity not only to highlight the prominence of this global health and development concern, but also to address concrete actions that can be carried out jointly so as to make such a basic aspect of our daily life safer and more sustainable.

The Republic of Moldova is committed to promoting and ensuring road safety. We acknowledge

what is a frightening problem in all its complexity and its consequences for our country's development. Although road fatalities in the Republic of Moldova decreased by more than 30 per cent for the period from 2010 to 2016, increases were once again noted in recent years. That gives us no relief in employing greater and constant vigilance in terms of our main legislative body, Government authorities, partners and society at large to ensure that our roads, infrastructure and road users remain safe. Last year, on behalf of the Moldova Parliament, I co-signed the Manifesto for Road Safety, launched by the Global Network for Road Safety Legislators, which sets forth ambitious targets and commitments, such as cutting by half the number of road-crash victims by the next decade, improving and expanding the network and accessibility of roads, improving data collection and leveraging funds for safer roads.

Applying the best international standards and practices in the management of traffic safety is particularly indispensable since a new programme for better roads in Moldova was launched in January. The programme is designed to build and restore local and national roads throughout the country. It is estimated to be the largest-ever infrastructure project in Moldova financed by the national budget, and it is a sustainable investment in the safety of our population, mobility, accessibility, commercial exchanges and development. That ambitious infrastructure programme has a strong road-safety component and is aligned with national campaigns to raise awareness about road safety for our people by using roadside billboards, leaflets, the distribution of reflective accessories and advertising on nationally televised channels.

I was personally involved in one such campaign with the slogan "Keep your kids safe in cars", and I am happy to lead and encourage parents to use child safety seats at all times to show what it means to shoulder responsibility and truly care for our loved ones. I can also proudly say that Moldova is among the 53 countries that meet best-practices criteria with regard to child-restraint laws, according to the World Health Organization.

At the institutional level, while seeking to achieve better inter-agency coordination and the implementation of the best international practices, in particular by adopting the European Union legislation on road-safety standards, we have introduced a platform for parliamentary control over road safety in our country. Only this past month, that parliamentary platform set the stage for the introduction of an education safety module, beginning with the preschool cycle and the establishment of a national legal entity for road-safety management. We are glad that our international partners, including the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the World Health Organization, among others, have stood by our side in realizing those accomplishments, and we look forward to their cooperation and contribution.

Much, however, remains to be done, and many improvements and projects remain to be implemented that will require much more than our political will or good legislation. I cannot but echo here the Secretary-General's conclusion that greater engagement by the international community is needed to scale up funding for road-safety activities, including through innovative financing mechanisms.

In conclusion, I remind everyone that road safety is not merely a privilege of modernity but is about saving lives on a daily basis. I hope that the messages expressed today in the Assembly will encourage additional activities and partnerships.

**Ms. Simonyan** (Armenia): Armenia welcomes the convening of today's meeting and the introduction of draft resolution A/72/L.48, entitled "Improving global road safety". We thank the main sponsor of the draft resolution, the Russian Federation, for its leadership, support and commitment to this important initiative.

Armenia has consistently co-sponsored this landmark draft resolution, which we see as a blueprint for action to prevent road accidents resulting in injuries and deaths. As we embark on our new national programme for road safety, we are determined to translate the commitments of this draft resolution into tangible, life-saving measures in Armenia. We are pleased to note that resolution 70/260, as well the road -safety-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), have been integrated into our national programme for the next five years as a comprehensive policy framework for improved legislation, enforcement and road-safety compliance. The Decade of Action for Road Safety has been a period of remarkable improvements in Armenia. Much has been done to increase road safety, including through the implementation and enforcement of appropriate laws, as well as soft measures such as awareness-raising and educational efforts, with a special focus on rural populations, children and

youth. Partnerships involving local authorities have contributed to safer and more resilient communities.

Despite many improvements, road-traffic accidents continue to remain a major public-health and development concern. Developing countries face particular types of challenges related to road safety. The poor condition of roads and inadequate infrastructure negatively affect trade from rural areas, while connecting local populations to markets remains a fundamental challenge for poverty eradication. There is a need for additional coordinated efforts to ensure safer road infrastructure, safer vehicles and safer road users, and we support the call to intensify national, regional and international collaboration to that end. Armenia welcomes the establishment of the United Nations Road Safety Trust Fund to support progress in achieving road-safety-related SDGs and relevant global targets.

We would like to convey our appreciation to the Special Envoy for Road Safety for his leadership and support in mobilizing political commitment and global action. We also thank the United Nations Regional Commissions and commend the role of the Economic Commission for Europe in particular for its long-standing commitment to road safety instruments.

**Mr. Sarmiento** (Philippines): I thank you, Sir, for giving me the floor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Philippines in support of draft resolution A/72/L.48, entitled "Improving global road safety".

The Philippines expresses its solidarity with Member States in reducing global deaths and injuries caused by road crashes and providing access to safe, effective and sustainable transport systems. Road-traffic deaths and injuries not only adversely impact the economy, but devalue human life and send a signal of despair and hopelessness to the public in general.

The Philippines is addressing this issue. Everyone is aware of the enormity of the problem. The Philippines has enacted the following seven laws that address key risk factors identified by the World Health Organization in support of the adoption of evidence-based global road-safety laws: first, the seat-belt use act of 1999, requiring the use of seat belts; second, the motorcycle helmet act of 2009, requiring the use of helmets; third, the anti-drunken or drugged driving act of 2013, prohibiting driving under the influence of alcohol, drugs and other intoxicating substances; fourth, the children's safety on motorcycle act of 2015, generally prohibiting any person from driving a motorcycle with a child on board; fifth, the anti-distracted-driving act, penalizing distracted driving or the use of mobile or electronic devices while driving; sixth, the road speed limiter act of 2016, addressing speeding by requiring the mandatory installation of speed limiters; and, seventh, the law extending the validity period of driver's licenses, which also mandates a strict driver's examination to weed out unqualified applicants. Moreover, the additional law mandating the use of child-restraint systems has passed the House of Representatives and will be deliberated upon soon in the Senate.

We take note of the enhanced cooperation in the international community and the support and assistance of various international organizations such as the World Health Organization and road-safety advocates such as the Towards Zero Foundation and the Global Network for Road Safety Legislators on this issue. Our synergized efforts have enabled the Philippines to push for those road-safety laws and meet the road-safety-related Sustainable Development Goals.

Despite those efforts, the number of road-traffic crashes globally remains unacceptably high. We are very concerned that, at the current rate of progress, the goal of halving the number of global road-crash deaths and injuries by 2020 may not be met. We in the Philippines are also having a hard time meeting that target. As of the end of 2016, road crashes were killing an average of 31 people a day, making it a major cause of death for our young people. This figure shows a 40 per cent increase in the number of deaths as compared with 2006.

What is happening in the Philippines and globally is demoralizing, but it is not for us to lose hope. The majority of road accidents are preventable. Let us strengthen our resolve to address this issue so that we can prevent lives from being lost and individuals from being injured. Many families have lost a member to a tragic road accident that could have been prevented had laws been observed or strictly implemented. We can do something, and we will make our best effort to address this issue.

We support the draft resolution contained in document A/72/L.48, which, inter alia, recognizes the United Nations Road Safety Trust Fund in supporting progress towards achieving the road-safety targets, invites national and international collaboration with a view to meeting the set targets, and explores the need

to define a new time frame for the reduction of road-crash deaths and injuries. We take special note as well of actions cited in the draft resolution that we believe will address the road-safety issue at the cultural level. This is what is needed in the Philippines: to create a culture of road safety among our people.

The invitation to intensify national collaboration, particularly in the area of law enforcement, would help instil discipline and deter unsafe driving behaviour. Promoting awareness through social marketing will increase people's desire to prioritize road safety on a daily basis. In addition, multi-stakeholder collaboration with academia and youth organizations could highlight education and produce a new generation of commuters that have due regard for road safety. More important, remembering the victims and working with them and their families would remind people of the names and stories behind death-and-injury statistics and inspire them to take appropriate actions to prevent such accidents and unfavourable events from occurring in future.

I wish to underscore that every life is precious, and one death is too many. Through concerted efforts, we continue to strengthen our resolve in this battle. We put ourselves at the forefront, together with others, to advance this goal in all these facets, politically, economically, socially and even culturally, for the sake of road safety. We reiterate our support for this draft resolution and the continued implementation of the global programme on improving road safety.

**Mr. Duque Estrada Meyer** (Brazil): It is a pleasure and an honour to be in this Hall today to talk about road safety, an issue that is of relevance to all of us, especially in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

At the outset, I want to highlight the importance of the biennial General Assembly resolutions on improving global road safety, which promote awareness of this issue at the global level. In that regard, I would like to commend the efforts made by the Russian delegation in its role as the facilitator of the negotiation process of the draft resolution to be adopted today (A/72/L.48).

According to the most recent World Health Organization report on road safety, 1.3 million people die annually as a result of road-traffic accidents, 90 per cent of which occur in developing countries. Reversing this trend and achieving global reductions in the number of deaths by traffic accidents is going to require stronger and more coordinated action from all stakeholders. The establishment of the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 provided us with a meaningful framework for international cooperation and action. I would like to take note of the significant work done by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Road Safety, who has continuously advocated, together with Member States and all relevant stakeholders, the promotion of the cause around the world.

Brazil is a strong supporter of road safety in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Therefore, we are pleased to see the issue addressed in both SDG 3, on health, and SDG 11, on cities, in the context of sustainable transport. Greater awareness, stronger political will and increased investments will be crucial for us to be able to achieve target 3.6, of halving global deaths and injuries from road-traffic accidents by 2020. I also wish to underscore the importance of Target 11.2, which places a particular focus on the needs of those in vulnerable situations, including women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons, all of whom tend to be disproportionately affected by road-traffic injury and death.

Last year, Member States agreed upon 12 voluntary global performance targets on road-safety risk factors and service-delivery mechanisms to reduce road-traffic fatalities and injuries. We encourage all countries to work together with the World Health Organization in the implementation of the targets and in developing indicators to assess their progress and achievements so as to maintain momentum and action towards national road-safety efforts.

Over the years, Brazil has developed comprehensive legislation to tackle the issue of road safety, in particular with regard to the federal zero-tolerance law on drinking and driving, which has reduced the number of accidents attributed to excessive alcohol consumption. This issue has been extensively dealt with by our National Congress, in consultation with local Governments and civil society. In that regard, I should like to announce that in January the Brazilian Congress passed a law that creates a national plan for reducing traffic injuries and deaths. The main objective of the plan is to halve the number of road traffic-related deaths in 10 years.

In a spirit of partnership and collaboration among Governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, academia and the

private sector, we must step up national action and international cooperation in order to improve road safety. In that connection, I congratulate the World Health Organization and its partners for organizing the twenty-fifth United Nations Road Safety Collaboration meeting this week. As the host country for the second Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety, held in 2015, Brazil would like to commend the Government of Sweden's proposal to host the next meeting in 2020. I also welcome the initiative taken by the Secretary-General and the United Nations system in formulating a road safety strategy to reduce the number of accidents, casualties and injuries among United Nations personnel and the civilian population in the host country.

Finally, I would like to point out that Brazil supports the initiative of establishing a new decade of action in 2020, as well as of convening a high-level General Assembly meeting on road safety in upcoming years.

Please allow me to add a personal note to my statement. I know how important this issue is, as I lost a brother because he was not wearing his seatbelt. Consequently, I strongly support this initiative.

**Ms. Sehnalová** (Czech Republic): I wish to align my statement on behalf of the Czech Republic with the statement of the observer of the European Union (EU) delivered this morning.

Road safety is a major societal issue worldwide which must be seriously addressed. From the European point of view, the number of road fatalities decreased from 31,500 cases in 2010 to 25,300 road deaths last year, which was achieved thanks in part to the legislative measures adopted at the European level.

Nevertheless, the number of people killed in traffic accidents is still too high. One of the legislative measures, with the potential to save around 2,500 lives on European roads every year, is a deployment of the public emergency call system, the so-called "eCall". In the case of a serious traffic accident, the system automatically dials the European emergency number, 112, and calls the rescue service. That will significantly reduce the arrival time of rescue services, by up to half in rural areas and 40 per cent in cities.

In that context, let me mention that, as a Czech member of the European Parliament, I have been working on that legislation as the main rapporteur in the European Parliament. Together with the EU member States, the European Parliament adopted that important regulation in 2015, and it finally came into force at the beginning of this month. The system will now be installed in all new models of cars and light commercial vehicles that fulfil the conditions to operate within the EU.

An important role in the eCall system is played by the Galileo Navigation System, which is operated by the European Global Navigation Satellite System Agency, based in Prague. The Czech Republic also actively participated in the development and testing of eCall and was among the biggest supporters of its implementation. Although the deployment of the eCall system was an important achievement, we need to continue with our efforts in different areas to decrease not only the number of road fatalities but also the number of injured and seriously injured victims of road accidents. The European Commission furthermore committed to publishing another legislative instrument to improve pedestrian protection, vehicle safety and road infrastructure safety. That is likely to happen in the upcoming weeks.

Despite all the legislative measures and developments in road safety, too many people die or are seriously injured on roads in the world every day. We must persist in our efforts. That is why we consider it of the utmost importance to set a strategic goal in the next decade similar to what we have aimed for in this decade — to halve the number of road deaths and serious injuries by 2030 as compared with the 2020 level. A call for setting such a goal has already been highlighted in a global challenge called the Manifesto #4RoadSafety, issued by the Global Network for Road Safety Legislators. I am personally very honoured to speak here as a member of the Network. The Manifesto #4RoadSafety calls on members of all Parliaments worldwide to take measures to substantially reduce the number of road deaths, and I would like to bring it to the attention of the members of the Assembly and encourage them to adopt the proposed measures.

We also very much welcome the proposed United Nations Road Safety Trust Fund. We believe that it could contribute to achieving the strategic goal of reducing the number of road accidents and serve as an effective measure to finance important projects that will help to improve road safety all around the globe.

We would like to urge everyone to strengthen efforts to reduce the number of road accident victims worldwide. The measures must be more intense and

targeted, and they must also effectively enforce the existing rules aimed at combating the most risky behaviour on the road. Indeed, our roads can be safer.

**Mr. Poudel Chhetri** (Nepal): It is alarming to note that road accidents are responsible for the deaths of more than 1.3 million people each year and that it is the tenth leading cause of death worldwide, especially of youth. Those figures are self-explanatory; we must take urgent action to reduce accidents. For that reason, we must work together to reduce accidents through various initiatives that ensure road safety and thereby make progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 3, on halving the number of accidents by 2020.

Nepal attaches great importance to all global road safety initiatives. We thank the Russian Federation for its leadership on, and support for, draft resolution A/72/L.48, entitled "Improving global road safety", to be adopted today. I also take this opportunity to thank the Deputy Secretary-General for presenting the report of the World Health Organization (see A/72/359) under this agenda item, and to appreciate the role of the World Health Organization in preparing the report by incorporating all relevant information to that effect.

We all want our roads to be safe. Many factors contribute to road safety. One thing that we should be clear on, therefore, is that we should effectively implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with a view to achieving holistic development. We should also make the vision of the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 a reality, including by implementing all the recommendations of the Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety, including the one Brazil held last year, as well as the full implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the New Urban Agenda of Habitat III, which was adopted in Quito.

It is also important to highlight that the recommendations of the *Global Status Report on Road Safety* 2015 should underline our collective action towards achieving all the goals and targets related to road safety. That demands more collaboration and partnerships from all stakeholders. Our actions also need to be guided by the shared commitments agreed in the resolutions that we have adopted in the General Assembly.

Nepal is a mountainous country, more than 85 per cent of which is covered either by mountains or by hills. The construction and maintenance of roads in that difficult terrain are extremely demanding. That has made our transportation not only dangerous but also challenging and costly. The high risk of natural disasters in the country has further added to the problems. The result is that in Nepal accidents frequently occur, and the number of fatalities is also increasing. In a period of just one year, from July 2016 to June 2017, there were 5,530 accidents, of which 201 were serious. Twenty years ago, the total number of accidents was only 2,390. Those figures exclude Nepalese nationals who died in traffic accidents abroad.

The Government's actions are focused on minimizing or eliminating all key risk factors of accidents, such as controlling the problem of speeding through various legal provisions, improving road traffic conditions, making drivers more responsible with regard to the use of alcohol and other substances, enforcing all safety regulations and taking other measures, as required. Raising road safety awareness through education, orientations and training is also an ongoing activity.

Finally, I wish to highlight the fact that challenges remain, and we need to work collectively towards addressing them. Nepal therefore focuses on effectively addressing the key gaps and challenges pointed out in the report of the Secretary-General, in particular with regard to better informing our decisions through data, the need for greater emphasis on meeting the goals of the Decade of Action for Road Safety, the mobilization of more funds, resources and partnerships, treating road safety holistically and scaling up action on all areas of road safety.

In order to ensure road safety, Nepal stands ready to work collectively for the desired results. In that regard, we seek even greater collaboration with all road safety stakeholders.

**Ms. Giron** (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of Spain, I would like to express our gratitude for this memorable moment in the adoption of the new draft resolution on improving global road safety (A/72/L.48) in the context of the Millennium Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with the specific inclusion, under target 3.6, of halving the rate of road traffic accidents by 2020. The draft resolution also seeks to achieve increased road mobility that is safer, more inclusive and more sustainable and will reach everyone by the year 2030, which will allow

for the greater economic development of nations and improved social well-being for their citizens.

Given that the Decade of Action for Road Safety was adopted in 2010 (resolution 64/255), it would be fitting that we ask ourselves what we have learned that will enable us to continue to make progress towards safer road mobility. Allow me to briefly mention the situation of road safety in Spain, whose significant improvement is closely linked to our active participation in and cooperation with the United Nations and the World Health Organization in particular, as well as other international, multilateral and regional organizations and entities that work to improve global road safety.

We in Spain have a population of 46 million inhabitants, a floating tourist population that exceeded 82 million people in 2017, a census of 28 million drivers and 33 million registered vehicles. In the year 1960, the number of road traffic deaths was 1,300, with 1 million registered vehicles. The highest number of road traffic deaths recorded in Spain dates back to 1989, when 5,940 people died in road accidents. In the period between 2004 and 2014, there was a cumulative decrease of 62.5 per cent in the road accident rate. In 2016, with the much greater and better supported mobility of both resident drivers and tourists and an exponential increase in mobility, the number decreased to 1,810 deaths and 9,755 people injured and requiring hospitalization. However, efforts to prevent stagnation in the reduction or an upward trend continue. Spain is working on amending the law on road safety and revising the national strategy, as well as a new State strategic plan for bicycles and the implementation of a connected vehicle platform.

Today, at a moment of such significance for global road safety, with this draft resolution, we would like to share the lessons learned in Spain on improving road safety.

First, we want to say that it is possible and that the proposed results can be achieved. The most effective way is to coordinate joint actions of the broadest possible scope both nationally and in particular internationally. The political commitment to including the promotion of road safety in political agendas is vital.

Countries must have a specific national organization for implementing Government policy on road safety and its strategy. In Spain, the Directorate General for Traffic devotes a large proportion of its actual capacity to ensuring the effectiveness of that task, with the the cooperation and inter-institutional support of other State, regional and municipal authorities.

Citizens must be an integral part of the process of improving road traffic safety in their country. To that end, there must be a consultative and participatory body for all citizens, in particular victims and their families. In addition, it is necessary to obtain reliable road data for decision-making, to continuously update road safety regulations and to focus efforts on vulnerable users. There must also be training and road safety education for all Government bodies and officials involved in road safety, as well as legal consideration of technology that has a positive impact on reducing the number of road accidents by fostering research and achieving agreements and accords among Governments and public and private entities that cooperate on promoting measures to improve road safety.

In conclusion, we would like to say that it is crucial to share experiences and good practices among countries, with the ultimate aim of having better road security. And as an example of good practice, next week we will celebrate the seventh General Assembly of the Ibero-American Road Safety Observatory. That is an example of regional commitment to security and road mobility, and this important draft resolution will certainly be of great help.

**Mr. Bolaji** (Nigeria): I wish to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening the 82nd plenary meeting to consider the draft resolution on improving global road safety (A/72/L.48).

Nigeria welcomes the imminent adoption of the draft resolution by consensus, and we acknowledge the commitment of and the leading role played by the Mission of the Russian Federation in this process. We welcome the work being done by the World Health Organization, the United Nations regional commissions, the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration, regional economic commissions and national road safety commissions in establishing, implementing and monitoring various aspects of the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020.

My delegation strongly welcomes and supports the establishment of the United Nations Road Safety Trust Fund, which is being launched today. We would also like to commend the Secretary-General for his report (see A/72/369) on the theme of the draft resolution.

According to recent data, every year around 1,000,350 people are killed, and around 50 million are injured in road traffic crashes, which makes it one of the most pressing emergencies and development issues of our time. Every day, 500 children lose their lives because of road crashes, and road accidents remain the leading cause of death of young people globally. At this time, if we are to achieve target 3.6 of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2020, the number of global deaths and injuries from road accidents must be reduced.

While road traffic and road safety are recognized as a key Sustainable Development Goal, inadequate funding, bad road networks, lack of awareness, as well as an absence of emergency health-care services have remained major challenges in keeping with our commitment to reduce road traffic deaths by 2020. Nigeria has intensified efforts in tackling these challenges by mainstreaming the work of the National Road Safety Commission into State policies, with a particular focus on rural transport safety, to ensure that no one is left behind. In October 2017, Nigeria also approved a road trust fund that is expected to accelerate delivery of significant construction of safe roads and road infrastructure, especially in rural areas and industrial clusters affected by bad roads. In 2018 an estimated $37 million was earmarked for the construction of those roads. With around $70 million of grant funding per year over the coming decade, the fund will save 5 million lives and prevent about 50 million serious injuries in low- and medium-income countries. Nigeria not only supports the trust fund, but anxiously looks forward to being the beneficiary of the envisaged financial support, which is necessary to tilt our ongoing intervention efforts to meet the Sustainable Development Goal of reducing fatalities by 50 per cent.

Once again, Nigeria welcomes the launching of and pledges its support for the trust fund as a vehicle to leverage additional funding, which I believe will strengthen the Federal Road Safety Corps in Nigeria and yield benefits worldwide.

**Mr. Mero** (United Republic of Tanzania): My delegation appreciates the inclusion of road safety on the global agenda of General Assembly, in particular the road-safety-specific target among the Sustainable Development Goal Targets. We thank the Russian Federation for facilitating the draft resolution before us (A/72/L.48).

Injuries represent a significant cause of morbidity and mortality worldwide. Road traffic crashes account for a significant proportion of those injuries. Tanzania is among the countries with high rates of road traffic crashes. Road traffic injuries in Tanzania are an important public-health problem, predominantly among the adult male population, due principally to motorcycle crashes. It is therefore important to reinforce preventive measures at the pre-hospital emergency services.

Tanzania is cognizant of the key factors of road accidents, including, among others, high-speed driving, driving while intoxicated and failing to use motorcycle helmets, seat belts and child restraints. Those factors must be addressed worldwide by improving regulations and enforcing their implementation. However, for developing countries, the quality of some roads as well as vehicles may also contribute to the problem.

Recalling that the Sustainable Development Goals and targets are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development and points to the importance of reach the road safety targets, such as target 3.6, which aims to halve by 2020 the number of global deaths and injuries resulting from road traffic accidents, and also target 11. 2, which aims to provide by 2030 access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, as well as improving road safety. The importance of the 12 targets in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals cannot be overemphasized.

We have to establish a comprehensive national road safety action plan with time-bound targets by 2020; accede to one or more of the core United Nations legal road safety instruments by 2030; enact regulations for driving time and rest periods for professional drivers; and comply with international regulations. Most importantly, legislators need to support and push these efforts. The concerted efforts of all stakeholders and the people in general is needed. In our region, legislators have formed various networks of parliamentarians for the purpose of creating and initiating good strategic conditions and reducing crashing. Now, we are glad that we are seeing a light at the end of the tunnel, as the number of accidents is being reduced.

Bearing in mind that road accidents reduce the workforce, the Government undertook a number of initiatives and interventions to strengthen road safety management in Tanzania. Goals include strengthening the institutional framework and organization of road

safety; improving road safety legislation, strategy and policies; improving accident data and data collection, and increasing access to data, including in-depth accident investigations; improving regulations of road freight and passenger transport; securing funding from different sources; promoting monitoring and evaluation; improving road safety research; introducing public-awareness campaigns concerning road safety rules; and teaching road safety in primary schools. Our efforts are yielding results. According to traffic statistics in Tanzania in 2017, reports show a 6.1 per cent reduction in deaths and a 5.1 per cent decline in injured persons — compared with 2016.

Pre-hospital emergency care to ensure that severely injured patients arrive at hospitals as soon as possible is crucial. The Government considers it a priority, though shortages of emergency care equipment due to a lack of funds remain a challenge.

My delegation also recognizes and appreciates the work of the World Health Organization (WHO), the coordinator of road safety for the United Nations system. We thank the WHO for its regular preparation of the *Global Status Report on Road Safety*, which it brings to our countries' attention. The reports have been an eye-opener to our policymakers and have helped us to improve our road safety. We take note that road traffic crashes constitute the tenth leading cause of death and are responsible for more than 1.3 million deaths among 15-to-29-year-olds and between 20 to 50 million fatal injuries globally. This is a cause for concern.

In conclusion, my delegation fully supports the draft resolution on improving global road safety (A/72/L.48), and we will sponsor it.

**The Acting President**: I now give the floor to the observer of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

**Ms. Ghukasyan**: I thank you, Sir, for the opportunity to provide this brief statement on behalf of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and its 190 national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

The IFRC is the largest humanitarian network in the world, whose mandate is to prevent and alleviate human suffering in all its forms. In that context, it was one of the first international organizations to call attention to the unspeakable pain and suffering caused by road crashes in its *World Disasters Report 1998*. Since then, our National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies have worked tirelessly to address this humanitarian disaster through first-aid services and trainings, and by working with their authorities to develop robust, evidence-based road safety laws and policies.

They are supported in this work by our hosted programme, the Global Road Safety Partnership, which works to establish partnerships with Government, private-sector and civil-society organizations to enhance road safety, particularly in lower- and middle-income countries where the needs are greatest. Using a multisectoral approach to improving global road safety, the Global Road Safety Partnership is currently operating in more than 40 countries, working in the areas of advocating for stronger road safety laws and policies, improving enforcement capacity and supporting interventions to enhance child road safety.

Road safety is an issue that is easy to overlook. Two decades ago, our *World Disasters Report* called it "a silent humanitarian crisis" because even though it has touched nearly every one of us in this Hall, few people understand the sheer magnitude of the problem or that it is the tenth leading cause of death globally, with 1.34 million people killed every year on the world's roads. In that respect, the adoption eight years ago of resolution 64/255, proclaiming the United Nations Decade of Action on Road Safety 2011-2020, and the subsequent creation of the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration were brave, bold steps by the Assembly.

However, we are nearing the end of the Decade and must ask ourselves some difficult questions about where we are today and whether we have done enough to reduce the catastrophic impact of road trauma on individuals, families, communities and nations. While it is true that road deaths have stabilized in relation to population increases since the beginning of the Decade, it is also true that they have continued to increase in absolute terms, from 1.28 million in 2010 to 1.34 million in 2015, according to World Health Organization (WHO) global health estimates.

But beyond the overall figures is another story about who is being left behind. As recognized in this year's draft resolution on improving global road safety (A/72/L.48), road traffic deaths and injuries remain a social equity issue in that the road trauma burden is experienced disproportionately across age and gender divides and among the most vulnerable. In that regard, we draw the Assembly's attention to the fact that road

crashes remain the leading cause of death among those aged 15 to 29 years and can thus be considered a disease of the young. Among youth, boys face approximately twice the risk of harm as girls, and children living with financial disadvantages are also at dramatically higher risk. The associated burden placed on communities means that there has not yet been sufficient progress.

So much remains to be done. In that regard, we welcome the decision by Member States to hold a third high-level global conference on road safety in Sweden in 2020 to bring leaders together again to continue to work at the highest level in promoting road safety for all citizens. Indeed, political will remains a vital and critical necessity, and we must be very careful not to let our attention flag.

However, meaningful action does not have to wait until the end of the decade. There are steps that Governments can and should take immediately to enhance road safety. We encourage Member States to implement the comprehensive range of evidence-based interventions contained in the WHO Save LIVES technical package, and to incorporate them into their national road safety strategies. In particular, we encourage the effective enforcement of strong, comprehensive laws and urge all Governments to actively work to strengthen legislation and to implement sustained resourcing of a robust enforcement programme. Such activity can offer immediate and affordable benefits if resources are correctly prioritized and focused.

For its part, the IFRC, together with our national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Global Road Safety Partnership, will continue to work with all Member States and the relevant organizations to realize the goals of this draft resolution, and we look forward to making a meaningful contribution to the 2020 Ministerial Conference on Road Safety in Sweden.

**The Acting President**: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/72/L.48, entitled "Improving global road safety". I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

**Mr. Nakano** (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/72/L.48: Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Canada, Chad, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malta, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Myanmar, Palau, the Philippines, Qatar, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam.

**The Acting President**: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/72/L.48?

*Draft resolution A/72/L.48 was adopted* (resolution 72/271).

**The Acting President**: Before giving the floor to the speaker in explanation of position, may I remind delegations that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America.

**Mr. Bagwell** (United States of America): The United States joined other member States today in adopting resolution 72/271, on global road safety. However, the United States finds it necessary to disassociate from agreement with paragraphs 5, 6, 9, 17, 21, 22 and 24. We also strongly maintain that, while the objective of resolution 72/271 may be well intentioned, we continue to question the need for it given the extreme particularity of local and national issues related to road safety.

We take this opportunity, as we have done on other occasions, to make important points of clarification on language related to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We underscore that the 2030 Agenda is non-binding, does not create or affect rights or obligations under international law, and does not create any new financial commitments.

The United States recognizes the 2030 Agenda as a global framework for sustainable development that can help countries work towards global peace and prosperity. We applaud the call for shared responsibility, including national responsibility, in the 2030 Agenda

and emphasize that all countries have a role to play in achieving its vision. The 2030 Agenda recognizes that each country must work towards implementation in accordance with its own national policies and priorities. The United States understands that paragraph 18 of the 2030 Agenda calls for countries to implement the Agenda in a manner that is consistent with the rights and obligations of States under international law.

We also highlight our mutual recognition in paragraph 58 of the 2030 Agenda that implementation must respect and be without prejudice to the independent mandates of other processes and institutions, including negotiations. It does not prejudge or serve as a precedent for decisions and actions under way in other forums. For example, the Agenda does not represent a commitment to provide new market access for goods or services, and does not interpret or alter any World Trade Organization (WTO) agreement or decision, including the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property.

With regard to the twentieth preambular paragraph, the United States has concerns about the inclusion of the phrase "technical standards" in this type of document. Standards and technical regulations have specific meanings within the context of the World Trade Organization, and there are WTO commitments related to those terms. The United States believes that the use of the term "technical standards" in the text, without further explanation, could lead to confusion with regard to which standards are being referenced and with regard to whether such standards conform to the definitions and the commitments members have taken under the WTO.

Also, in paragraph 3, we want to note a concern regarding the language concerning consensual approval and encouraging the adoption and use of indicators. We would not want those phrases to imply that the World Health Organization (WHO) targets and indicators were approved by all WHO member States, or that we would encourage the adoption of both the targets and indicators. This year's meeting to discuss the indicators did not reach final consensus, and no firm plans exist to continue the discussion in an open forum.

The United States disassociates from agreement on paragraphs 5 and 6. The United States objects to the specific reference to, and praise for, agreements that, in many of the reference cases, were undertaken pursuant to a regional United Nations sub-organization to which, in some cases, only a small number of United Nations Members are contracting parties and which have been used, in some cases, by contracting parties to pursue trade policy objectives that are not always consistent with WTO obligations. In particular, the United States has strong concerns about the use of the statement to encourage members to join those agreements.

The United States disassociates from agreement on paragraphs 9, 17, 21, 22 and 24. The United States objects to the specific reference to United Nations standards, as it gives the appearance that there is somehow a preferred United Nations-approved type of standard, when in fact the standards are developed in a regional body and in a way that is not consistent with the WTO definition of international standards. Specific mention of a particular type of standard is also not necessary for the objective of those paragraphs, or indeed this resolution, which is to advocate for road safety. A neutral formulation advocating the adoption of vehicle safety regulations for all new vehicles should be adequate for the purpose and intent of this statement.

Finally, the United States maintains that national Governments are best positioned to balance the safety and other factors that inform their adoption of standards and regulations, and we do not support any references or attempts to create a United Nations standard.

**The Acting President**: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of position.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 12?

*It was so decided.*

**Agenda item 7** (*continued*)

**Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items**

**The Acting President**: In order for the Assembly to take action on draft resolution A/72/L.43, it will be necessary to reopen consideration of the item.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to reopen its consideration of agenda item 11?

*It was so decided.*

**Agenda item 11** (*continued*)

**Sport for development and peace: building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal**

**Draft resolution (A/72/L.43)**

**The Acting President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Turkmenistan to introduce draft resolution A/72/L.43.

**Mrs. Ataeva** (Turkmenistan): On behalf of the delegation of Turkmenistan, allow me to thank all delegations for their constructive and fruitful negotiations, as a result of which the substantial draft resolution A/72/L.43, on World Bicycle Day, was drawn up.

The global Goals stipulated in the Sustainable Development Goals seek to realize the human rights of all. Cycling is already delivering on these goals worldwide, which is a good reason to invest more in cycling. Making transportation more sustainable is of critical importance for humankind and the planet.

The bicycle plays a major role in personal mobility around the world. Given the convenience, health benefits and affordability of bicycles, they could provide a far greater proportion of urban passenger transportation, helping to reduce energy use and carbon dioxide emissions worldwide. An estimated 1 billion people ride bicycles every day, for transport, recreation and sport.

As we all know, the bicycle is a mode of transport that has served humankind for two centuries and is also used in sport. In this connection, I would note that transport and sport are one of the key directions of the policy of Turkmenistan. Noting the importance of sport as an important factor in ensuring sustainable development, our country reaffirms its firm commitment to strengthening international sports cooperation aimed at implementing the principles of development and peace, empowering people and addressing health, education, social integration and other issues.

In this regard, Turkmenistan, as a member of the Group of Friends of Sport for Development and Peace, as well as one of the initial countries to promote transport, decided to combine transport and sport in the form of the bicycle in this draft resolution.

A recent example of the promotion of bicycling in Turkmenistan was the cycling event held on 7 April in Ashgabat. On that day, together with the international community, Turkmenistan widely celebrated World Health Day. A mass cycling race, as well as numerous other sports activities involving the whole country and uniting thousands of people around the idea of a healthy lifestyle, were scheduled for that date.

The primary purpose of the establishment of World Bicycle Day is to celebrate, on an annual basis, the bicycle, which has been in use for two centuries. One of the secondary goals is the global unification of bicycle enthusiasts' efforts to present the role of cycling as a solution to worldwide problems in such areas as transportation, pollution, climate change, poverty, health and education, with a common aim and under the leadership of the United Nations. Creating a United Nations-endorsed World Bicycle Day would help to unite the diverse civil and citizen-led initiatives into a global undertaking.

Many noteworthy days of recognition are celebrated by the United Nations, all of which highlight meaningful efforts and accomplishments. The bicycle, as a loyal instrument of humankind, deserves a day of recognition, too.

We express our gratitude to those delegations that sponsored the draft resolution and look forward to a consensus on the adoption of the draft under consideration.

**The Acting President**: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/72/L.43, entitled "World Bicycle Day". The draft resolution has closed for e-sponsorship.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

**Mr. Nakano** (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to those delegations listed therein, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/72/L.43: Afghanistan, Angola, Argentina, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Canada, Chad, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Egypt, Estonia, Honduras, Iceland, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ireland, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Maldives, Monaco, Morocco, Myanmar, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Palau, Peru, Qatar, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Singapore, Sri Lanka,

the Sudan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, Uzbekistan and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

**The Acting President**: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/72/L.43?

*Draft resolution A/72/L.43 was adopted* (resolution 72/272).

**The Acting President**: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 11?

*It was so decided.*

**Agenda item 14** (*continued*)

**Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields**

**Draft decision (A/72/L.47)**

**The Acting President**: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft decision A/72/L.47, entitled "Theme and sub-themes of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft decision A/72/L.47?

*Draft decision A/72/L.47 was adopted* (decision 72/554).

**The Acting President**: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of position, may I remind delegations that explanations of position are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. El Ashmawy** (Egypt): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

At the outset, allow me to express my appreciation on behalf of the Group to President Lajčák for having convened the current meeting and to congratulate us all for having adopted the decision on the theme and sub-themes of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, to be held in Argentina from 20 to 22 March 2019.

In this regard, we welcome the overarching theme of the "Role of South-South cooperation and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: challenges and opportunities", upon the recommendation of the Secretary-General. South-South cooperation is a manifestation of solidarity among the peoples and the countries of the South that contributes to their national well-being, their national and collective self-reliance, and the attainment of the internationally agreed development goals.

Furthermore, as laid out in the Nairobi outcome document of the High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation, South-South cooperation and its agenda have to be set by countries of the South and should continue to be guided by the principles of respect for national sovereignty, national ownership and independence, equality, non-conditionality, non-interference in domestic affairs and mutual benefit. South-South cooperation offers opportunities to strengthen international cooperation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Nevertheless, let me be clear in reiterating that South-South cooperation is not a substitute for, but rather a complement to, North-South cooperation.

The Group of 77 and China would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate Member States' request through resolution 72/237 for the Joint Inspection Unit to present, by the end of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, a progress report on its recommendations to the United Nations development system on implementing measures to further strengthen the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation.

Lastly, I would like to express our appreciation to the Permanent Representative of Uganda for his leadership role as the Chair of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, as well as the other members of the Bureau. Let me also commend the continued commitment of Argentina to strengthening South-South cooperation. Forty years ago, Argentina hosted the first United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries. Next year, Argentina will organize the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation. We have high expectations that the upcoming Conference will step up South-South cooperation based on the Buenos Aires Plan of Action and the Nairobi outcome document of the first High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation.

**Mr. Bagwell** (United States of America): The United States strongly supports South-South and triangular cooperation. Although we joined the consensus on the

theme and sub-themes of the High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation to be held in Buenos Aires in 2019, we take this opportunity to reiterate our call for transparency and consultative processes going forward. We look forward to an open and transparent negotiation on the draft outcome document in lieu of a simultaneous Second Committee draft resolution. To that end, we expect a detailed timeline for all negotiations and consultations leading up to the conference, which we understand remains in development.

Lastly, although we note the Secretary-General background paper, we strongly oppose the use of multilateral platforms to elevate bilateral initiatives or programmes that promote an individual country's economic and political policies or agendas. It is one thing for Member States to do their utmost to deconflict their national parties or policies with multilateral instruments. It is another thing, and entirely inappropriate, for a Member State to attempt to use United Nations forums to glorify its current leader's political musings and lend a veneer of legitimacy to mercantilist economic initiatives. The purpose of South-South cooperation should be genuine partnership that leads to sustainable development, not the asymmetrical export of one country's excess capacity into another in an exploitative neocolonial fashion.

**The Acting President**: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of position.

We will now hear statements following the adoption of decision 72/554.

I give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

**Mrs. Pape** (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States.

We welcome the background note of the Secretary-General on the preparatory process for the second High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation, to be held in Buenos Aires in March 2019, as well as decision 72/554, adopted today. We look forward to a timely, open, inclusive and transparent negotiation process for the draft outcome document of the High-level Conference, which should begin no later than November. In that context, we also suggest replacing the annual Second Committee draft resolution on South-South cooperation in 2018 with a draft decision referring to the Conference draft outcome document and the preparations.

**The Acting President**: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 14.

**Agenda item 7** (*continued*)

**Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items**

**The Acting President**: Members will recall that, at its 72nd plenary meeting, on 15 September 2017, the General Assembly decided to allocate agenda item 19 to the Second Committee. In order to enable the General Assembly to take action expeditiously on the document before it, may I take it that the Assembly wishes to consider agenda item 19 directly in plenary meeting and proceed immediately to its consideration?

*It was so decided.*

**Agenda item 19** (*continued*)

**Sustainable development**

**Draft resolution (A/72/L.42)**

**The Acting President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Turkmenistan to introduce draft resolution A/72/L.42.

**Mrs. Ataeva** (Turkmenistan): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/72/L.42, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea". We are pleased to underscore the broad interregional support for this draft resolution. During the negotiations process on the text of the draft resolution, we made every effort to maintain a constructive atmosphere and achieve consensus.

The name "Aral Sea" is today associated with an ecological disaster in the Central Asian region. The Aral Sea was formerly the fourth-largest lake in the world before it began to shrink. There were ports and fish-processing factories, and fishing fleets navigated off its coasts. But, since the 1960s, its sea level and water volume have rapidly declined owing to the lack of water from the its main feeder rivers. Over the past 50 to 55 years, the volume of water in the sea has decreased more than 15-fold. Its level has decreased by 29 metres, and 5.5 million hectares of salt sand have formed on its surface. That has had a negative impact on the ecology, the flora and fauna and the lives of people of the region.

The menacing impact of the Aral catastrophe has been noted throughout the world today. According to international experts, poisonous salts from the Aral Sea region are present in various areas, such as off the coast of Antarctica, on the glaciers of Greenland, in the forests of Norway and in many other parts of the world. Now, tragically, it is clear that making the Aral Sea whole again is already impossible. The most important task of our time is to reduce the destructive impact of the Aral Sea crisis on the environment and the survival of millions of people living in the Aral Sea basin.

In 1993, the Heads of State of Central Asia established the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, with the aim of overcoming the ecological crisis and improving the social and economic situation in the Aral Sea basin, recognized by the international community as one of the biggest catastrophes of the twentieth century. With draft resolution A/72/L.42, the sponsor countries want to draw the attention of the States Members of the United Nations to the fact that, without the support and assistance of international financial institutions and developed countries, and without the leading role of the United Nations, it will be impossible to solve this problem. The draft resolution takes into account the fact that the negative humanitarian, environmental and social economic consequences of the Aral Sea basin tragedy go well beyond the region and are of global concern. In that regard, the draft resolution reaffirms that achieving international cooperation in solving international problems of an ecological, economic, social and humanitarian nature is one of the purposes of the United Nations. We are convinced that this draft resolution will provide increased opportunities for strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea.

In conclusion, we express our hope that this important draft resolution will be adopted by consensus. We call on all countries to join the sponsors in supporting draft resolution A/72/L.42, which will give an additional impetus to our common efforts. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the countries that have already sponsored the draft solution.

**The Acting President**: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/72/L.42, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea". The draft resolution is now closed for e-sponsorship.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

**Mr. Nakano** (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, in addition to the delegations listed in document A/72/L.42, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: Austria, Azerbaijan, China, Ecuador, Gabon, Georgia, Latvia, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, South Africa and Turkey.

**The Acting President**: May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/72/L.42?

*Draft resolution A/72/L.42 was adopted* (resolution 72/273).

**The Acting President**: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of position, I would like to remind delegations that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mrs. Moldoisaeva** (Kyrgyzstan) (*spoke in Russian*): In 2016, the Kyrgyz Republic adopted a decision to freeze its participation in the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) and its related bodies because of their ineffectiveness and owing to expectations that they would soon be subject to amendment and reform. However, the negotiations held among experts in the region led nowhere, and therefore it was decided that IFAS reform should occur through negotiations among all its members and include experts from all member countries, including those that had managed the Fund. All the States of Central Asia, including the Kyrgyz Republic, took part in the negotiations. It is our hope that the Central Asian countries will soon come to an agreement on how to reform the Fund in order to improve its effectiveness, taking into account the various interests and serious concerns of all Central Asian States.

**Mr. Salarzai** (Afghanistan): At the outset, I would like to thank the Permanent Mission of Turkmenistan for its leadership in submitting the draft for resolution 72/273 and for working towards consensus for its adoption. In expressing our support for the resolution on the strengthening of the cooperation between the United Nations and International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, we would like to highlight a few points.

First, Afghanistan attaches great importance to the fostering and strengthening of regional cooperation in all its forms. In that regard, we see common water resources as elements in providing platforms for constructive engagement and cooperation. In using common water resources, Afghanistan believes in the principles of comprehensive and sustainable management. Finally, as an observer State in the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, Afghanistan assures the Assembly of its continued engagement and positive role in fostering international cooperation to address the challenges faced by the Aral Sea.

**The Acting President**: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of position.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 19.

**Agenda item 117** (*continued*)

**Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit**

**Draft resolution (A/72/L.46)**

**The Acting President**: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/72/L.46, entitled "Scope, modalities, format and organization of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases".

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/72/L.46?

*Draft resolution A/72/L.46 was adopted* (resolution 72/274).

**The Acting President**: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of position, may I remind delegations that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Bagwell** (United States of America): The United States supports the adoption of the modalities resolution on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) (resolution 72/274). We appreciate all of the work of the resolution's facilitators, Italy and Uruguay. We also thank Uruguay for convening and leading the World Health Organization Global Conference on Non-Communicable Diseases, with Chairs Finland and Russia, and the effort spent developing its outcome document, which we consider to be a snapshot of the discussions at that time on non-communicable diseases.

There is continued need for global urgency to address non-communicable diseases as the major cause of premature death worldwide and the cause of 60 per cent of the global disease burden. There is a significant body of work to underpin the national and international action to reduce the overall mortality due to non-communicable diseases and on a range of risk-reducing actions and control measures.

We look forward to sharing the United States' experience in addressing NCDs and contributing to advancing the NCD agenda at the high-level meeting, which presents an important opportunity to take stock of progress and challenges, encourage collaboration across sectors and stakeholders and accelerate efforts to prevent and address NCDs.

The high-level meeting's theme — "Scaling up multi-stakeholder and multisectoral responses to the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases, in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" — rightly emphasizes the critical need to work together across disciplines and stakeholders to make significant sustained progress towards the goal of reducing by one third by 2030 the premature mortality from NCDs through prevention and treatment, as well as promote mental health and well-being.

There is a tremendous amount of positive work being done in all sectors to address NCDs, and the high-level meeting provides a platform to amplify those initiatives that are most effective in helping Member States reach our 2030 Agenda. The United States welcomes the opportunity to share our experiences in addressing NCDs and looks forward to the moment when we can mobilize the resources of academia, civil society and the private sector in working towards real and practical solutions that save the lives of those suffering from NCDs.

We look forward to the contribution of the interactive hearing that will allow all stakeholders an opportunity to offer innovative approaches for progress on the prevention and control of NCDs. The United States would like to share the following observations and concerns regarding the report of the Secretary-General (A/72/662) on progress on the prevention and control of NCDs, and on the report of the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) as well, both of which are noted in the resolution.

We understand that there is a revision of the WHO report, and we look forward to its reissuance

as revised. We also look forward to the reissuance of the Secretary-General's report. We would appreciate confirmation from both WHO and the Secretariat that the updated reports will be made available in the near future and that those updated and revised reports will be the basis for further work in relation to the high-level meeting preparations.

The United States shared our position regarding the Montevideo road map, which remains relevant as we continue in planning for the high-level meeting. We would like to emphasize that, given the complex risks, factors and causes of NCDs, we cannot base NCD strategies primarily on experience with tobacco — an addictive product that is not comparable to processed foods and beverages. NCD strategies must be comprehensive, cost-effective, evidence-based and multisectoral in nature. Recommendations and measures taken must be grounded in science and supported by evidence of their effectiveness in improving public health outcomes, rather than simply their effectiveness in shifting purchasing patterns, without corresponding public-health improvements.

Finally, we also look forward to a consensus approach to the work of the co-facilitators ahead and the adoption of a concise outcome document that will renew the political commitment on NCDs and set the course for greater partnership approaches to solving the challenges of NCDs.

**The Acting President**: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of position.

We will now hear statements following the adoption of resolution 72/274.

I give the floor to the representative of Uruguay.

**Mr. Rosselli Frieri** (Uruguay): On behalf of Ambassador Cardi, Permanent Representative of Italy, and on my own behalf, I wish to thank the President of the General Assembly for the co-chairmanship entrusted to us and all delegations for their constructive engagement and commitment to the negotiations on resolution 72/274, entitled "Scope, modalities, format and organization of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases".

We celebrate the consensus reached on the adoption of the resolution today, and we look forward to working together in the upcoming months in preparation of the 2018 comprehensive review of the progress achieved in the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases, which is a most substantive issue for the entire world.

Let us reassure members that we are committed to guaranteeing that the process of consultations on the draft outcome document to be adopted by the General Assembly is inclusive, transparent and Member State-driven. Alongside Ambassador Cardi, I remain at the disposal of Member States to work towards achieving the bold objectives of our agenda.

**The Acting President**: I would like to express my sincere thanks to Ambassador Sebastiano Cardi of Italy and Ambassador Elbio Rosselli Frieri of Uruguay, co-facilitators of the informal consultations, who demonstrated great ability and patience in their conduct of the discussions and the complex negotiations on resolution 72/274. I also thank members for their valuable contributions to reaching an agreement on the resolution.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 117.

**Agenda item 123** (*continued*)

**Strengthening of the United Nations system**

**Draft resolution (A/72/L.45)**

**The Acting President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Honduras to introduce draft resolution A/72/L.45.

**Ms. Flores** (Honduras): I have the honour, under item 123 of the agenda of the General Assembly at this seventy-second session, to introduce draft resolution A/72/L.45, entitled "International Association of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations". We extend our gratitude to the delegation of Belarus for its leadership in the drafting and consultation process, and to all the sponsors and Member States for their constructive participation in support.

In May 1948, the General Assembly adopted resolution 257 (III), regarding the establishment of permanent missions, considering their presence served to assist the realization of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the necessary liaisons between the Member States and the Secretariat in periods between sessions of the different organs of the Organization, and referenced the generalization

of the institutions of permanent missions and the accreditation of Permanent Representatives.

The International Association was founded on 2 February 1988 at Headquarters by a group of like-minded Permanent Representatives, acting in their personal capacity, with the objective of serving as an institutional forum of continued communication between present, former and future Permanent Representatives to the United Nations. The establishment of the Association furthered the role of the diplomatic community that served with distinction in harmonizing the actions of all nations for the attainment of common ends.

In the words of President Samir S. Shihabi of the International Association,

> "Those who shoulder the responsibility of representing their countries have a duty in respect to society at large. The qualities, the experience, the perspective of the International Association's distinguished membership constitute a unique asset for the United Nations and for the community at large."

Secretary-General Pérez de Cuellar, a member and first patron of the Association, stated that

> "As a former Permanent Representative to the United Nations myself, I am convinced that you are resolved to help the United Nations in its mission of securing peace, promoting and protecting human rights and in the achievement of sustainable development. It is my sincere hope that the Association will enjoy great success as a reward to the remarkable imagination and industry that has launched it on its way".

The International Association of Permanent Representatives — in three decades, by means of the Presidents of the Association, the Executive Boards and membership at large through dedicated efforts and joint cooperation — has advanced intercultural dialogue and strengthened the work and prestige of the Organization and the international community.

Finally, allow me to express my sincere hope that the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

**The Acting President**: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/72/L.45, entitled "International Association of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

**Mr. Nakano** (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of draft resolution A/72/L.45, in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become sponsors: Bangladesh, Cabo Verde, Cuba, Iceland, India, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Pakistan and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

**The Acting President**: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/72/L.45?

*Draft resolution A/72/L.45 was adopted* (resolution 72/275).

**The Acting President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Belarus, who wishes to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted.

**Mr. Dapkiunas** (Belarus): Two months ago, the International Association of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations (IAPR) turned 30 years old. Today, through resolution 72/275, it is finally getting its due acknowledgement, a promise of improved accommodation and the much-needed informational support of the United Nations information technology experts.

It is never too late to do the right thing — and the reason that the IAPR was established is good and right. The IAPR is not a leisure club. It is not even a trade union of Ambassadors, in the conventional understanding of the word. In my opinion, the IAPR is the single most undervalued tool for breaking through the walls of United Nations formality. Often unintentionally or against our will, those walls are built with bricks of impersonality and detachment. Those bricks are cemented with a glue of double-talk and wordiness.

Through its continued existence, the IAPR conveys a simple, yet very potent, idea. Notwithstanding the power of the institutional, people continue to matter most. If the hope and the promise of the Charter of the United Nations are ever to be fully realized, it will happen not through the magical concurrence of policy instructions sent to the United Nations from the myriad of world capitals. However, it may happen if United Nations Ambassadors, encouraged and

supported by IAPR activity, use their extraordinary and plenipotentiary powers to stay in personal touch, to rally their courage to connect, to be open and to seek ways to build greater trust and more sincere empathy.

The IAPR is not a machine. At any given moment, it is defined by the personal features of its leader and inspirer. That is why today I would like to pay tribute to all the IAPR Presidents, whose selfless service kept the Association going.

On a more personal note, I would like to make a specific mention of the IAPR Presidents whom I know and remember and whose work from the heart provided inspiration for the support of Belarus to the cause of the IAPR: Ambassador Mihnea Motoc of Romania; Ambassador Hjálmar Hannesson of Iceland; Ambassador Byrganym Aitimova of Kazakhstan; Ambassador Daniele Bodini of San Marino, honorary President of the IAPR, whom we are most honoured to see here with us in the Hall; and Ambassador Mary Elizabeth Flores of Honduras, current President of the Association and the dedicated mastermind of the IAPR's greater prominence and visibility. As one of the co-authors of the resolution's initial text, I would like to humbly dedicate this document of the General Assembly to her.

**The Acting President**: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 123.

*The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.*